

[REDACTED]

The NAR in Detail

As outlined in the ‘Step by Step Work Instruction’ the NAR should be reviewed to confirm that all the recommended support/items are fully justified. This is not always something that is cut-and-dry and every scenario cannot be covered in one document.

All recommendations should be assessed on a case-by-case basis; decisions should be based on the information available in the report and from the student’s medical evidence.

Recommendations where justification has been received will be reviewed. It is important to note that DSA Officers take a common sense approach when reviewing if justification for support is permissible.

Where there is support that cannot be agreed please ensure that it is clear within the DSA2 that this has not been agreed and give a brief explanation why.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[illegible]

The Regulations allow for the DSAs to be used for additional expenditure which SLC is satisfied the student is *obliged* to incur in connection with their attendance on (or their undertaking) a designated course. This would not allow the DSAs to be used to support a student when participating in Freshers' week or other extra curricular activities where there is *no link* with the course of study. However, in the event that the extra curricular activity is a course requirement, the payment of DSA to enable the student to participate in that activity may be considered. Examples might be a music student participating in a choral society, or a drama student involved in a drama group. It is recommended that the DSAs can be used to provide support for students during induction meetings they might have with their course tutors during Freshers' week (as well as during other parts of their course) as long as this is course-related.

- External keyboard (required)
External Mouse (required)
Surge protector (required)
USB hub (required)
External speakers (only required if not built in to the monitor)

If any of the equipment quotes do not include the bundle you should go back to the assessor and request 3 new like for like quotes.

If the Study Needs Assessor provides a reason why a bundle / bundle item is not required, then this should be accepted and does not need to be queried.

If any of the quotes have a recommended item of support missing, or include something that is not recommended then the assessor should be contacted to query this and request that 3 like-for-like quotes are provided.

Check that the warranty and insurance. As a general rule the duration of the student's course should be covered (and amended quotes should be requested where it is not covered) however there are some other scenarios that you may see.

Where a NAR is carried out towards the end of an academic year e.g. May/June in year 1 of 3 some Needs Assessors will provide 3 years warranty to ensure the full course duration is covered. However some will only provide 2 years cover as they have deemed that in the final year the course is usually complete before August and therefore they would not provide a full year cover for the sake of one or two months. In these cases we will accept the Needs Assessors Recommendation and you would not need to question this. (There is some ongoing work to determine a cut off day for providing the extra year but this has not yet been determined, therefore we will accept the Assessors decision.)

There are also scenarios where the Needs Assessor has identified that a student will go on to study a Postgraduate course after their Degree and will add on an extra year warranty at the time of the NAR. If we were to ask for the extra year to be removed and then the student did return for the PG course we may be required to pay for a health check before the extra warranty can be considered, whereas paying for this upfront may save this cost. The opposite risk is that they do not return and we had paid for an extra years cover for no reason. It has been agreed that were this does occur we will accept the Needs Assessors Recommendation for the length of warranty.

[REDACTED]

Separate Equipment and AT Training

This update confirms that Equipment and AT Training quotes will be considered as a separate item from the 1st March 2013. DSA Officers would compare the three equipment quotes, choosing the most cost effective and then compare the AT Training quotes and choose the most cost effective. There will be no longer be a marginal allowance for both equipment and training to be delivered from the same supplier.

NOTE - When choosing this please refer to the [DSA Contacts - HEI Assessment Centre spreadsheet](#) to ensure the supplier will train on other suppliers equipment. Currently only Prima will not.

Should a student wish to change the supplier they would need to inform us as per their DSA2 Letter.

Please note that currently AT Training is included in NMH and one quote would be accepted for any HEI on this list (**until April 1st 2013** when **2 quotes** would be required in all instances for AT Training).

QAG Suppliers and Assessment Centres have been notified of this which should ensure their quotes for training are priced as if not winning the equipment order.

Choosing Quote on Net Cost

Also from this date we would look to choose the quotes for all support (equipment, AT training and NMH support) based on the Net cost rather than the Gross Cost. However, although the quotes will be selected based on Net Cost, the full Gross Cost should be entered onto the DSA2 letter, NLP Screen and Student Database to ensure invoices are not rejected due to a difference in price. Examples of how this will work are given in the [quote selection document](#).

The reason for this is, by removing VAT as a variable when comparing quotes, we feel this will satisfy our interest of ensuring a level playing field amongst all suppliers that submit quotations. Currently, there appears to be some inconsistency of VAT application amongst suppliers which is a matter that will need to be addressed by HMRC. However we would still expect to see quotes containing any appropriate VAT where applicable, as we need to factor this in as a spend to a student's DSA allowance.

Computer Specification Document

The latest version of the Specification Matrix Document can be found [here](#)

Changes to the latest (March 2014) version include:

- O/S updated to Windows 8.1.
- Removed footnote regarding 'Windows 8 to be supplied where the AT software is compatible'.
- Laptop i3 minimum Ivy Bridge processor speed changed from 2.2 to 2.4GHz, to reflect products remaining in the marketplace.
- WKH / Classic 17" removed
- All computer specifications have alternatives to reflect withdrawal of 3rd generation and introduction of 4th generation processors
- Basic Apple specification guidance introduced
- Addition of table 3 - default printer definition and default voice input software headset definition
- 'Standard' packages for desktop and notebooks given more detailed descriptions for keyboard, mouse and laptop stand. This means that we can now challenge recommendations for higher cost bundle items and request disability related justification.

These specifications – from the March 2014 document – should be adhered to for Needs Assessment Reports carried out **on or after 16/03/2015**.

DSA Bundle – USB Pen/CDs

After a recent review of the Specification Matrix Document, the USB Pen Drive should no longer be included as part of the SFE Bundle. The latest version of the Specification Matrix Document can be found [here](#)

As of the 14th January 2013, [REDACTED] have been asked to remove the USB Pen Drive from their quotes (including those generated in the CQS system). From this date we will ask for updated quotes from the Needs Assessor if they still list the USB Pen.

If the assessor provides a disability related justification for this item, it can be reviewed, however it could be considered all students would be required to back up work and transfer work between computers so the justification must be specific to the students disability.

Also, packs of CDs are being included in some quotes and the reason, in some instances, has been due to supplying a smaller size USB Pen so they include CDs. Please note from the above date this should also not be accepted. CDs have never been part of the bundle so should not be included/agreed. We have asked Suppliers and Needs Assessors to remove this item as of 14th January 2013.

External Speakers

External speakers are not part of the DSA bundle for laptop computers.

External speakers may be included in the bundle for desktop computers, only if they are not built in to the monitor provided (the quote should specify whether the speakers are built in or not). External speakers should only be agreed outside of the DSA bundle if appropriate justification is given in relation to the student's disability, for example a hearing impaired student may require the speakers to amplify the sound to a level greater and clearer than the laptop speakers can manage. Recommendations in relation to a student with SpLD who needs external speakers to assist phonological processing or auditory working memory should not generally be considered as the quality of laptop speaker should be sufficient.

A recommendation for external speakers should not be accepted because the laptop speakers sound 'tinny' or 'like the computer is underwater' – all DSA provided laptops should be of sufficient specification and quality to adequately run the assistive software for most students and will have suitable quality speakers.

Computer Specifications Classic WKH vs Creative CAD

There have been a few cases recently where a Needs Assessor is specifically recommending a Creative CAD computer over the standard Classic WKH computer.

The current process is that the Creative CAD computer should only be recommended where there is some kind of Creative/Design/Course software that requires a higher specification machine to be able to run it. Generally where you see software such as Mind Mapping / Text to Speech / Speech to Text, the Classic WKH computer should suffice.

If it is advised that a student may need / want to purchase their own design software then they would also need to upgrade the computer at their own costs.

Update 24/06/2013; Recently Needs Assessors have been trying to justify a CAD computer when Dragon has been recommended by advising that this programme requires the higher specification machine. This has been queried with the Specification Subgroup who have confirmed the following:

At the last meeting of the specification group, the issue of whether or not the WKH / Classic specification was adequate for Dragon speech input software was discussed.

The group are satisfied with the specification, having set this at previous meetings. So, issues such as the updated release of Dragon (v12) and computer configuration were considered. The most significant issue identified, was that a lot of computer manufacturers have a default configuration which enhances battery life. This is to the detriment of speed of processing. Suppliers selling computers with Dragon software installed need to ensure that both Windows power settings any OEM 'eco' utilities are configured for speed rather than power saving.

If you receive justification for a CAD, and they advise this is because of Dragon, you should go back to the Needs Assessor and inform them this subject has been discussed with the Specification Subgroup who have confirmed a WKH is of suitable specification. If they have any queries/issues with this, you should ask them to contact their supplier reps who can liaise with the group.

When processing Needs Assessment it is important that where you see a specific recommendation for a Creative CAD computer in Section C, that you check what software is being provided. If the computer should only be a Classic WKH they you should follow the Pend Process to query this with the Assessor. You should ask them why a Creative CAD is being recommended and advise that we would only fund this specification if the software we are providing requires this to run.

We have also been made aware that some centres may not be specifically recommending this Creative CAD but then adding this to the quotes and this is something we do not currently check for, so some may have been slipping through. Going forward, we ask that you have a quick scan of the quotes to see if a Creative CAD is being quoted for. In these instances if they have quoted for this over the Classic WKH you should refer this to your contact for the referral panel and hold it while the case is discussed. We will then be able to gather some figures and determine what is best practice going forward. This will also give us some idea of the size of the issue.

You should be able to identify the type of computer by looking for the words Classic / WKH or Creative /CAD without needing to look in detail at the actual specification of the full machine. If you have any questions please speak to your team leader or your referral panel contact who can discuss with management if required.

The latest version of the Specification Matrix Document can be found [here](#)

Funding of i5 machines for course specific software

If the supply of course specific software from the DSA has been justified within the NAR and the Needs Assessor states that in order to run this software a student will need an i5 machine this can be agreed for funding from the DSA.

We have recently started to see recommendations for an i5 machine to run course specific software which the Needs Assessor is not requesting funding for – this is usually because the HEI are providing this to the student free of charge. As long as there is a disability related justification for the student to have access to this course specific software and the Needs Assessor has stated that this is the reason that an i5 is required we are able to agree to fund this higher specification from the DSA.

The fact that a HEI is providing course specific software to all students would not be sufficient justification for an i5 machine to be supplied from the DSA - it should only be agreed in circumstances where DSA would have funded the course specific software had the HEI not been providing it for free.

If you have any cases where you are unsure about whether there is justification you should refer these to your TL/Referral Panel Rep in the first instance.

If you have any questions please ask.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Operating System (OS) Changes – Entitlement

We have recently come across a couple of different scenarios in relation to changes in operating systems and the affect that they are having on the functionality of students' Assistive Technology.

Please read through the below information and if you have any questions about the course of action you should take please do not hesitate to ask.

Updates to Apple OS

Towards the end of last year Apple released their most recent OS 'Mavericks'. Owners of Apple computers are encouraged to upgrade to this system to allow them to make the most of the enhanced features and improved security.

In some cases students have experienced issues in using their Assistive Software once this update has been implemented. We have been contacted by Needs Assessors to request funding for new versions of software to allow the students to continue to benefit from the recommended strategies.

This issue has been raised with the AT Subgroup for advice, discussed with the internal policy team and DSA Management. In the first instance, when such a request is received, we need to enquire whether the original QAG supplier is able to revert the computer back to the previous OS to allow the student to continue using the recommended software. It is hoped that suppliers will be able to do this for free, however if there is a cost it can be funded from the student's DSA. If the supplier is not able to resolve the issue for the student and new software is needed then this can be funded from the DSA.

The BATA group of suppliers (16 of the QAG suppliers) has agreed that when a new Apple OS is to be released they will contact their students to warn them of any issues that may arise – this should help to reduce instances of this happening in the future.

Windows 8 Compatibility

There are instances where a student may be provided with a replacement computer during their course, this would now be provided with the Windows 8 OS.

We have seen requests to replace previously awarded Assistive Software as it is no longer compatible with this new OS. Although there are some ways round this it can reduce the functionality of the software (remove some

of the features) and may be complicated for a student to set up. It is therefore felt that if a Needs Assessor recommends that a student is provided with updated versions of Assistive Software to ensure compatibility with a new DSA funded machine we should look to support this request. Not providing new software would mean that the student does not have access to the software to support the recommended strategies.

Reimbursement Policy Change

As of 24th January 2013 DSAs are not available to cover the costs of any equipment already bought by the student. Therefore, with immediate effect, students should not be encouraged to buy equipment ahead of their study needs assessment and subsequent SLC approval, as they will not receive any reimbursement for it.

This reflects the stated intent of DSAs that they should be available to cover the additional cost of attending HE resulting from a student's disability. BIS take the view that equipment already in the student's possession cannot be considered to be additional. It is acknowledged that sometimes students purchase equipment without realising they are entitled to support, or that some students may wish to purchase equipment in advance of their course. However this is considered to be the only fair way to apply the policy.

This process should include all items and support, apart from Interim NMH (as the guidance specifically states this can be put in place and reclaimed). This means student claims for any of the following; Equipment, Travel (apart from to the Needs Assessment), Internet, Books, Batteries, Consumables, Photocopying/Printing costs and other miscellaneous items that may be recommended.

Some examples are given in the body of the process below.

NOTE - It has been confirmed by BIS that accommodation will not follow this new reimbursement process. Recommendations for accommodation should be agreed as per current guidance and refunds will be made when the correct receipts/claims have been submitted. (Please note BIS have advised there is potential for this to change going forward but for now this should be followed.)

NOTE – Effective from 07/02/2014, if you receive a student claim for travel undertaken prior to the date of agreement in DSA2 letter, instead of rejecting the claim please refer it to Management – via your Team Leader - for advice. This is because BIS have requested we capture details of such occurrences.

What this means for you – DSA Officers...

The way in which you agree to the above items in your DSA2 letters would not change. A line has been added to all versions of the DSA2 letter in the General Allowance Next Steps to advise 'Only items purchased after the date of agreement can be considered for reimbursement'. This line covers the above decisions so students are aware.

The only support which is not affected by this reimbursement process is Interim NMH claims as the guidance specifically states NMH can be put in place and reclaimed through the DSAs.

Exception

The only exception to the rule is if it is confirmed by the Needs Assessor in the NAR report that the Disability Adviser/HEI advised the student to purchase this item up-front and advised they would get a refund, then we can consider this.

[Redacted text block]

[Redacted text block]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Upgrades

Students will sometimes express a wish to upgrade the equipment that has recommended in the NAR. This is permissible as long as the equipment is still suitable for the student's DSA needs and if the student pays the additional cost. It should be noted that the student may be required to pay VAT on some items if they are not solely for disability related reasons. The standard paragraph is already in the DSA2 template advising the student about upgrading (If the student is not being supplied any specialist equipment then this section should be removed).

Mac Upgrades – please be aware that should a student decide to upgrade to a MAC then they must also cover any additional cost(s) of software and other agreed items, as often software for this platform would be more expensive.

Recommendation for funding to build own PC

It has been agreed SFE would not support a student's request to use the money awarded for a PC to build his own system.

Issues were raised surrounding this which was discussed with Policy who has also backed this decision. Students are still able to upgrade or purchase a machine elsewhere but due to some concerns we will not support these requests.

Invoicing/Claims, Warranty/Insurance and Audit were seen as problem areas.

Invoicing/Claims - as we aren't fully trained in IT and the building of computers, we may not be able to determine from individual receipts what the items are and if they were purchased for this purpose. This would cause problems with the student trying to claim the refund of parts.

Warranty/Insurance - the computer would not have any warranty/insurance cover which is important

Reliability - we cannot be sure that the built machine will support the other recommended hardware/software

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Ergonomic Equipment

Staff should process any quote for Ergonomic Equipment at the same time as the standard equipment - provided that it is included within the NAR. The details of what has been agreed should be entered as per the format in the table on page 1 of the DSA2 letter. Please note that only one quote is needed for Ergonomic Equipment as this is a specialist area. This also applies to other specialist equipment types; e.g. hearing aids.

If the student has been recommended Ergonomic Equipment or other Specialist Equipment (e.g. FM Transmitter) but a quote is not available at this time, the paragraph from the Appendix should be entered into the DSA2 letter. Once the quote is received an updated letter should be sent.

Ergo Pens/Ergo Pen Grips

Recommendations for an allowance (generally around £50 per year) towards ergonomic pens/pencils are not a common thing, but typically get recommended for dyspraxic students, to help with pen holding, pen grip or reducing pen pressure needed to write. Some assessors will recommend an allowance for pen grips rather than actual pens, to give the same end result in alleviating problems with writing.

All students are required to purchase pens etc for their studies in Higher Education and any recommendation for ergo pens would essentially be a request for DSA to fund a student's stationary for the course. As DSA can only fund additional costs incurred as a result of a disability, the only way around this would be to deduct the cost of a 'standard' pen from any ergo pen recommended – however any student can choose any pen they like and therefore it is not possible to identify what a 'standard' cost would be, e.g. one student may prefer to buy 10 cheap biro's for £1 a set, whereas another student may prefer to pay £30 for a Parker pen.

Recommendations for ergo pens should therefore be considered carefully before agreeing, see below.

Instead of funding ergo pens, an allowance for the purchase of pen/pencil grips may be more feasible. This means that the student will still have to purchase their own stationary – as any other student would – but DSA would be funding the grips, which can be transferred between pens when the ink runs out and therefore should only be a one-off cost. We would also be satisfying the principle of only paying the additional costs due to disability, as the grips would represent a wholly additional cost that a non-disabled student would not incur.

There may be exceptional instances where DSA could consider funding an allowance towards ergo pens/pencils, rather than grips, perhaps for a physical disability/deformity in the hand where pen grips will not be sufficient – but these should be considered on a case by case basis and should be the exception rather than the norm.

An allowance for ergo pen grips (or ergo pens in exceptional cases) would come from the general allowance, rather than the equipment allowance, as they can be more broadly categorised as a consumable item (in the same vein as printer cartridges or livescribe nibs).

U-Top Slopes

A U-Top slope is included by some assessors within their quotes, **in place of** the more standard – and more cost effective – laptop risers (such as the Kensington Easy rider). As there is no 'specification matrix' for the standard/specification/costs of items included in the laptop bundle, we have no recourse to question assessors who include this particular model of laptop stand in the bundle. Therefore if they have this included in the bundle/quote then you can agree the quotes as normal (assuming they are all like-for-like and do not include any other cause for pending the NAR, etc).

However, if a U-Top slope is included in the NAR/quotes **as well as** a standard laptop stand, then this needs to be queried with the assessor. Full disability related justification should be requested as to why the ergonomic U-Top slope is being included in the quotes. If no justification can be provided then we should request revised quotes to only include the standard laptop stand and to have the U-Top slope removed from the quotes. Where the assessor tries to justify the U-Top slope for ergonomic reasons then this can be awarded in place of the standard slope where we have supporting medical evidence. Should the condition for which DSA is awarded not warrant the need for specialist ergonomic equipment and the assessors justification cannot therefore be supported, we would expect that the standard laptop stand is left on the quote, not the U-top slope.

Recently (Nov 2013) some NARs have stated that the U-Top Pro stand "has an integrated security device for locking the keyboard, mice and other accessories thereby providing enhanced security for the equipment". As we have previously established that we [do not fund security locks](#) these were being queried. However, upon further investigation the wording within the NAR is misleading and the U-Top stand does not have a security lock and they are actually referring to some notches and a magnetic strip on the stand that keeps the equipment in place. We are therefore OK to agree to the U-Top and the U-Top Pro stands as part of the laptop bundle – in line with the scenarios above.

There is a laptop stand which does have a security lock (Ergo - Top 320) so were this to be included within quotes it should be queried with the Needs Assessor.

Update 09/03/2015

The latest version (March 2014) of the specification matrix has given more detailed descriptions for keyboard, mouse and **laptop stand**. This means that we can now challenge recommendations for higher cost bundle items and request disability related justification.

Rental Equipment

Due to the length of time remaining on a student's course it may be more appropriate for equipment to be loaned or rented rather than purchased.

For students who are agreed to attend a Needs Assessment we would expect to see at least 1 rental quote where the date of assessment on NAR is within **6 months or less** remaining on their course. The 6 months is calculated back from the student's course end date that we have on our system, which was provided by their HEI.

If there is a big gap between the date of assessment and date sent to funding body and you are concerned that rental quotes should be now provided, please refer it to your Team Leader for a decision.

The quotes provided within the NAR should clearly indicate 'Rental or Loan'. In some cases the Assessor may provide quotes for both rental and purchase of equipment. In this case the quotes should be reviewed and the most cost effective should be selected.

Less than 6 months left on the course:

Scenario 1:

3 purchase quotes and no rental quotes on NAR → ask for 1 comparison rental quote

Scenario 2:

3 purchase quotes and 1 rental quote on NAR → compare all 4 quotes

Scenario 3:

3 purchase quotes and 3 rental quotes on NAR → compare all 6 quotes

Scenario 4:

3 rental quotes → compare those quotes

Scenario 5:

1 purchase and 3 rental quotes → compare all 4 quotes

Scenario 6:

1 purchase and 1 rental quote → compare those quotes

HOWEVER If there is more than 6 months left on the course and we receive 3 purchase quotes and some rental quotes on NAR → compare these quotes. Do not disregard the rental quotes as long as the rental period covers the remainder of the course.

Update 08/01/2015

It has been highlighted that there could be a slight issue with the way we select equipment quotes when comparing Net Costs when rental quotes are involved.

Due to VAT regulations, purchase quotes have VAT exemptions, however rental quotes do not. Therefore a rental quote could be cheaper Net but more expensive Gross.

- **It has been agreed that when comparing rental vs purchase quotes, you can use the Gross Cost for both the rental and purchase quotes and select the cheapest quote.**

To put this into context, if we were to continue with Net, we could agree a rental that overall costs more than the purchase, so the student could then 'upgrades' to the purchase which would be cheaper and in fact save us money. This would cause extra rework for us which is why we have agreed to use the total cost in these instances.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Student intends to continue their studies

If a student has already applied for a top-up or Post-Graduate course or it is identified in the NAR that the student does intend to continue their studies, purchase quotes would be allowed over rental as this would save funds going forward. Although this information on the NAR is only based on what the student intends, this is an official document which is signed by the student and therefore this information can be accepted.

Scenario 1:

3 purchase quotes and no rental quotes on NAR → compare the quotes

Scenario 2:

3 purchase quotes and 3 rental quotes on NAR → disregard rental quotes and compare purchase quotes

Specialist equipment (ergonomic / hearing impaired)

We can agree to purchase quotes for specialist equipment such as ergonomic equipment or equipment for hearing impaired students, regardless of the length of course left, as such items cannot be rented.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Late Applications

An application is treated as a 'late' if there are less than 14 weeks remaining of the student's course when they first apply for DSA. Due to the length of the application and needs assessment process, students applying late in the final year may not receive their DSA support before the end of their course. Instead of directing these students for a needs assessment (in the usual way), SFE will guide them directly to their university or college Disability Officer, to get access to the support they need quickly. This is usually done at the Eligibility Stage by sending the Late Applicant Letter.

We will accept and agree recommendations received from Disability Officer regarding any Non-medical Helper and General Allowance. There is a [Late Applicant pro-forma](#) which Disability Advisers can submit with the students application. Where this pro-forma is not received with the application, the Disability Adviser can complete and submit the pro-forma on receipt of our Late Applicant letter.

When issuing a DSA2 letter where the recommendations are from a Disability Officer (rather than from a NAR) this will be reflected by altering the first line of the DSA2 letter using a standard paragraph (see [DSA appendix](#)).

Please note Disability Officers at this stage can request that a student attends a Study Needs Assessment if they are unable to provide recommendations themselves or the feel equipment is required. In this case we would agree to this and send the student for an assessment. For any equipment recommended at this late stage, we would expect to see comparative quotes for rental and purchase of equipment.

[REDACTED]

Overlay Bars / Bar Magnifiers / Reading Rulers

These items should be listed within the equipment section in both the table on page 1 and the 'Next Steps' section. Make sure that they are listed separately with the agreed cost. This only applies if the item is to be supplied by a different supplier, if it is included within the agreement equipment quote it does not need to be listed separately.

If the Needs Assessor has given contact details for the supplier of the overlays/bar magnifier/reading rulers etc they should be agreed as per the standard equipment agreement. If there is just a figure they should be detailed in the DSA2 like as a reimbursement (student claim). These items should only be agreed 'per academic year' if this is specifically stated within the NAR.

Gel Wrist Rests

These items if included in Quotes in the NAR must be backed up with a disability related justification and should not be included as standard as they are not part of the "bundle". Where these items are included but not

justified DSA Offices would need to go back to the Assessment Centre and ask for justification or updated quotes without this item.

Course Specific Software

As of 17th September 2012 SFE will not be agreeing to fund Course Specific Software for any students with SpLDs (ADHD is NOT included in this. This has been agreed at the DSSG working group and was issued on the August DSA Bulletin to all stakeholders. Any recommendations that are made for this software must be passed to Anthony Hill to review.

When refusing these recommendations the following text should be used:

"I am sorry, but we are unable to support your recommendation for course specific software in this particular case. We only consider this on exceptional grounds. However, if you feel there is additional information you would like to put forward in respect of this, I will have the case reconsidered".

However, if the justification appears very robust within the NAR, or if the Needs Assessor is referencing that they are already recommending this in 'exceptional grounds', then these can be passed straight to Anthony, [REDACTED] for consideration.

Please take the above approach in future rather than just confirming that we will *"no longer accept recommendations for course specific software students with SpLD's"*.

Just for further context, the reason for our change in approach on this matter was that it was evident that Course Specific Software was being recommended by Needs Assessors with little or no justification. It was also evident that some of the justifications being used were very questionable. Despite the change in approach, we do still need to assess each case individually and on its own merits. Although our change in approach has backing from the sector, it does cause concern if our communications give an impression of a blanket assessing approach being applied to a particular disability category.

Course Specific Materials

There may be cases where a student requires specialised course specific equipment due to their disability, e.g. specialist stethoscope. In these instances the additional cost can be funded by the DSA but we must ensure that we deduct the cost that all students on the course will need to pay. If it is not clear within the NAR what cost all students will incur please refer back to the needs assessor for further information before agreeing the item.

iPads and Kindles

At present all recommendations for these types of equipment should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on the medical evidence and justification given. If you feel that there is sufficient information to agree one of these items this should be reviewed with your TL before any agreement is made.

iPod applications

If recommendations are made for an allowance to download application(s) for an **iPod**, we should not generally agree to these. Assistive technology provided through DSA should be fit for the purpose being recommended, e.g., a voice recorder will capture notes without any other requirements. An iPod will generally be recommended almost exclusively as a time management/organisational aid (in the same way that a PDA would have been recommended up to around 2010). Since the iPod Touch comes pre-loaded with an e-mail app, a web browser, a calendar/diary app with reminder and alert functions, clock and countdown apps, a notepad app and HD camera/recording facilities, the item is fit for purpose as an organisational aid without the need for further apps.

While there are some assistive technology apps available, e.g., Dragon app is free, these are generally a cut-down version of full software. Funding of any assistive software apps would not generally be considered through DSA where the iPod has been recommended for time management/organisation as this will generally be a duplication of support (e.g., the student may already have the full Dragon software for their computer) and would also be providing funding for a purpose the iPod was not recommended for. Click [here](#) for some examples of apps that may be recommended through DSAs.

It should be remembered that DSA funds assistive software (e.g., Dragon, MindView, etc) as a primary aid to support the students' additional needs. That DSA funds a computer platform is typically only as a direct result of the need to run this assistive software. There is therefore a distinction between why DSA funds assistive software for computers but may not fund assistive apps for iPods (since, in the case of apps, we are being asked to fund the iPod primarily and then the apps in order to be able to use the iPod).

Please note that there will of course be instances where funding for an iPod app may be justified through DSA. A common example is where a student already owns an iPhone or iPod and the assessor recommends a microphone and an audio-capture app (such as Converser) so that the student can record lectures. This would be made in place of a voice recorder device. Since this solution would be more cost effective and require the student to carry less equipment we could agree to the app and microphone. We would not however be agreeing to the iPod itself and would therefore not advise the student to get this insured (if this was lost/damaged then DSA would expect to see a recommendation for a voice recorder rather than a replacement iPod). There may also be circumstances where an assessor recommends an iPod for time management and also recommends that it be used for capturing lecture notes – in this scenario we may also agree to the cost of the microphone and app as a cost effective strategy. The iPod should not be recommended as a note taking device on its own however, as dedicated voice recorders can do this task and are generally a lot more cost effective and built for this purpose.

As with most things, each case should be judged on its own merits and reviewed in regards to the justification given. If funding for iPod apps is agreed then this should be paid from the equipment allowance, as this would be funding for software on a piece of Assistive Technology.

If in any doubt please speak to your Team Leader or a member of the Q&D team.

iPad applications

Funding for **iPad** apps should be considered on a case by case basis on the information provided in the NAR report, with consideration given to the following points (please note that this is not wholly exhaustive of what may need to be factored into a decision);

Does the iPad already have a functionality for this (e.g., time-management, e-mail, internet, camera, photography, notes, calendar, contacts, e-reading)

Does the app represent duplication of support (e.g., word processing software when student already has a computer, or mind mapping software when the student already has the full software on their computer)

Has the iPad been recommended for a specific purpose and are the app(s) needed in order to realise this purpose; in which case is a more suitable solution available/appropriate

Is there some reason why an iPad is needed as well as a computer (e.g., placements etc), in which case is the duplication of support appropriate and justifiable?

Funding for iPad apps, rather than iPod apps, would be more likely as an iPad will sometimes be recommended for a student in place of a computer, we could then fund for Apps, such as Mind Manger software or text to speech software, as this would be in place of paying for the software versions of these programmes on a computer. Sometimes a student may be awarded an iPad and a computer – where a student has been awarded a computer with Assistive Technology software then it may not be reasonable to fund apps for the iPad as well as this could be seen as a duplication of support.

It should be remembered that DSA funds assistive software (e.g., Dragon, MindView, etc) as a primary aid to support the students' additional needs. That DSA funds a computer platform is typically only as a direct result of the need to run this assistive software. There is therefore a distinction between why DSA funds assistive software for computers but may not fund assistive apps for iPads (since, in the case of apps, we are being asked to fund the iPad primarily and then the apps in order to be able to use the iPad).

iPad apps for time management etc should not generally be considered for funding, as the iPad comes pre-loaded with such apps, in the same way the iPod does (see above).

The equipment allowance would be used as we would be funding what is essentially a piece of software for equipment used as Assistive Technology.

Examples of Apps

Some of the apps that may get recommended are given below (please note some of these are currently available free of charge, others are paid apps and others have free counterparts)

Dragon – voice dictation app

Speak It – text to speech app

Audionotes – note management app

iThoughts – mind mapping app

Pages – word processing app

Converser – audio recording app (used with external microphone for recording lectures etc)

Apple Mac Computers

At present all recommendations for these types of equipment should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on the course the student is studying, the platform the HEI uses and the students own experience with computer technology. Mac books are more predominantly used on design, arts and media related courses and recommendations for this would be accepted but we do not have an extensive list of these courses. We should look to the Needs Assessment which should provide clear justification in relation to the course on why a Mac has been recommended. There are also some HEIs which only have Macs so this would be acceptable.

With regards to the students own experience with this format, we would not accept statements such as "to ensure compatibility with their established method of working" or "the student has using MAC for a number of years" or "the student is unfamiliar with a PC and feels unsure how to navigate around a Windows operating system". Such statements on their own would not be sufficient and would need to be backed up with something that states it would be detrimental to them or it would mean additional training costs to provide a Windows based system.

Also please note the smallest screen available for an Apple Mac Desktop is 22 inch so these would not need to be queried.

From 10 December 2012 when a student's course platform is PC based, a Mac platform will not be funded through the DSA scheme. The only exception to this will be when a specific disability related access reason is evidenced within the Needs Assessment Report. Student preference will not be a determining factor. SLC will continue to review exceptions on a case by case basis.

From 10th December 2012 (date we process the NAR) we will no longer agree MACs if the course is PC based unless there is exceptional disability related justification.

If the course is MAC based we are ok to agree to a MAC

This should be clearly identified in the NAR. This confirmation should not be given by the student. (If the report says this information is from the student it should be questioned).

We should not assume a course is MAC based because of its title. E.g. Design courses must still have confirmation in the NAR that the course is MAC based.

If the NAR states the industry is MAC based this is not enough, we need the course to be MAC based.

HEIs that only use MACs e.g. Falmouth - we are ok to agree a MAC. This should be in the NAR.

If the course is not MAC based a MAC must have full disability related justification which should be passed for review

Preference alone is not acceptable.

If they have always used MACs and it will take additional training then this is not disability related and can be refused - DSAs can only provide AT Training on Assistive Technology, not on the actual computer system/set up.

If they have always used MACs and they link this to the disability e.g. Processing/Memory Difficulties then this should be referred.

All disability related reasons must be referred some might include: Mobility/Access issues, Visual Learners (Autistic students).

If at the time of the NAR the student already owns a MAC but only a PC would have been agreed (please refer to updated [reimbursement process](#) before agreeing to it)

If a reimbursement is recommended we will only refund up to the cost a Windows PC that would have been recommended.

If Assistive Software is recommended we will pay for this software on MAC platform (the difference is only minimal so we will cover this).

Upgrades (no changes to usual upgrade process)

If the student is agreed a PC and wants to upgrade to a MAC with the QAG Supplier they will need to cover any additional cost above the agreed quote price.

If the student is agreed a PC and wants to upgrade to a MAC from a High Street Retailer we will only refund up to each individual item price on the chosen quote.

Video Recording Devices

SFE should not seek clarification from a HEI regarding permission that a student can record lectures but instead should liaise with Needs Assessors regarding further clarity of a HEI's stance on the use of a video recording device, if required. This will need to be done when a video recorder is recommended to video capture lectures, seminars, etc, but where it is not confirmed in the NAR if the HEI allows students to capture such sessions.

This is because when an audio visual recorder has been recommended in a NAR, SFE have, on occasions, then received further requests for a different piece of equipment - because it transpired that the HEI does not allow the use of video recorders in lectures.

As SFE's responsibility is to protect the public purse, we do not want to agree to fund a piece of equipment that will be of no use and will therefore check with Needs Assessors where required, before agreeing to such an item.

We should ask the assessor for confirmation that that an audio visual recorder can be used on site for the purpose of intent, but should not ask the HEI for this confirmation. If the assessor confirms the device can be used, this is sufficient; we do not need it in writing from the HEI.

Health Checks

There are some distinctly different scenarios when it comes to Health Checks - please read the examples below. Please note that there is never going to be 'hard and fast' rules when it comes to this and there will always be an element of discretion/common sense. If you are unsure about what action to take in a particular instance you should refer to your TL.

Example 1 - 1st NAR - Student has own equipment - Needs Assessor states this is not fit for purpose e.g. faulty/wont run recommended software....

You should accept the Needs Assessors recommendation and agree to fund new equipment.

Example 2 - Student had their own equipment - At time of NAR it was fit for purpose - We are now contacted by the Needs Assessor - No longer fit for purpose....

You should initially explore the warranty/insurance route. When a student has their own computer we should advise them to take out warranty/insurance on the DSA2 letter. If the student did not take our advice and take out additional warranty/insurance we should try to find out why.

Once this has been explored and they are unable to claim through either of these options, we would expect some form of evidence that the equipment is faulty. If no evidence has been provided a Health Check can be considered a reasonable course of action. If a Needs Assessor categorically states that the equipment has been subject to a health check and has been found to not be repairable; we should take their word on this matter, we do not need to request a document confirming this.

Example 3 - Equipment previously provided through DSA - We are now contacted by the Needs Assessor - No longer fit for purpose....

You should initially explore the warranty/insurance route as we would have provided this with the equipment. You can use the Equipment Invoice/NAR to determine if this is still covered, if it is the student should be referred back to the supplier. If the equipment is not covered, you should use your judgement about whether to agree a health check or not. For example, if the equipment is 3 years old and the student is going onto a one year course a health check would be considered reasonable. However, if the equipment is 8 years old and the student is starting another 3 year undergraduate course it may not be reasonable. **Please note that these timeframes are not set in stone, all instances should be looked at based on a case by case basis.** If there are concerns about the performance of the computer, it may be sufficient to ask the supplier to provide a history of the maintenance and support records.

Example 4 - 1st NAR - Student has their own equipment at the time of NAR - Needs Assessor requests a health check to ensure that the machine will run the software which is being recommended

Regardless of the age of a student's own machine a Needs Assessor/Supplier may wish to carry out a health check on it before recommended software is loaded onto it. The reason for this is that, although the Needs Assessor will have access to the technical specification of the machine a student may have loaded additional software onto it or downloaded a virus which may affect performance. In these cases it is ok to agree to a health check if this is included within the NAR. It should be noted however, that if a Needs Assessor/Supplier has not requested a health check in this scenario the quotes should be accepted and the case does not need to be pended.

Example 5 - Student's DSA supplied equipment has developed a fault - Health Check requested - Machine is under warranty

If a student's machine is under warranty and develops a fault the cost of a health check should be covered under the warranty - the DSA should not be asked to cover this cost from the Student's allowances.

If you have any questions regarding the above please refer to your TL in the first instance.

Disposed DSA computer / equipment

Please see below clarification on dealing with requests for replacement equipment after previous one was disposed of.

This would apply in a situation when we receive the recommendation either via an email or it is stated in the NAR we are processing that the student had DSA equipment but disposed of it.

We should not be agreeing to a replacement computer if the student disposed of their previous DSA funded equipment without referring it to a Team Leader. Please find out the following information prior to referring the request to a Team Leader who will then speak to Anthony Hill / [REDACTED] / decision:

- check if the equipment is still under the warranty and / or when the warranty / insurance expired
- check when the equipment was awarded
- check if there was a break in study since the computer was disposed of
- check if we were contacted regarding the broken equipment
- check what was the reason of disposing of it
- find out if the student had their equipment checked / attempted to repair it / what was broken
- what is the student's disability

how long the student has got remaining on the course
check if student was sent the updated DSA2 letter with paragraph regarding disposing of equipment

Anti Virus

As per guidance from Management, all Needs Assessors should only be recommending Microsoft Security Essentials. This is a free product, fit for purpose and should not be charged for.

Updated 12/04/2013;

Windows Defender - you may begin to see Windows Defender listed in the Needs Assessment as a replacement for Microsoft Security Essentials.

We have been advised that Windows Defender has been updated and is now a full anti-virus where as in the past it was not, so another anti-virus was required to run alongside it.

This is free as part of Windows 8 so you don't need to question this and don't need to ask for Microsoft Security Essentials.

Where Windows 7 is the operating system, Security Essentials will still be required because Windows Defender, as a full anti-virus programme, is only built in to Windows 8.

Security Cables/Locks

This item, if included in quotes in the NAR, must be backed up with a disability related justification and should not be included as standard as they are not part of the "bundle". The following line should be added to the DSA2 letter (this can be found in the [DSA2NOEAPPENDIX](#));

Please note that the security cables included in the above quote have not been agreed. We have contacted the supplier to confirm this. Should you wish to have this item included in the order you will need to pay the additional cost.

There is no need to deduct the cost of the cable when looking at who wins the quote. On the DSA2 letter you should indicate the total amount of the chosen quote. You should add a comment box to the invoice sheet advising not to pay for any security cable that may be included. You should also add a note to LA Portal to indicate we will not pay for security cable.

This process only applies until 12th November 2012; if we receive quotes after this date which includes security cable then we should call the Needs Assessor to request justification/revised quotes. If the assessor provides a disability related justification for this item, we are OK to accept it, however most reasons provided could be argued that all students with a laptop would benefit from this item.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Mattress

Policy have advised that DSA should not be used to fund mattresses. Advice from Policy confirms that DSA should be paying for justified study related items. If a student decides to live away from home, disabled or not, they might face extra costs to meet their needs and should take this into consideration before deciding to live away from home. Cases should be referred to the referral panel for review.

Learning Labs

A product called *Learning Labs* was introduced to SFE. SFE referred this product to BIS Policy and a decision has been made that this item will not be funded through DSA. If any recommendations are received for this item they should be declined by advising the Needs Assessor that SFE are unable to fund this item.

Update 03/03/2014 – Following a decision by BIS this product is **now eligible for support from the DSA**. Please note that, as in all cases, recommendations for this support must be accompanied by full justification. ****THIS ONLY APPLIES TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 28/02/2014 ONWARDS. WE WILL NOT BE RETROSPECTIVELY REVISITING PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS****

Please also see these FAQs below. If you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to ask [REDACTED] (DSA AT Specialist).

Which allowance with Learning Labs be paid from?

As Learning Labs is a software subscription - for the duration of the course - it is paid from the student's specialist equipment allowance, although you may sometimes see it listed under the AT Training section in quotes.

How many quotes are needed for recommendations for Learning Labs?

Although the company that produce this product are closely linked with Invate Ltd, all QAG suppliers are able to provide the product so three quotes will be needed for comparison - in line with normal procedures.

How would a recommendation for Learning Labs for a student who was previously refused this product be reviewed?

As stated below we will not be retrospectively reviewing cases from before the 28th February 2014. If any new recommendations for previously assessed students are received these should all be reviewed on their individual merit.

Should comparable products now also be agreed?

No, this agreement from BIS only covers the Learning Labs brand, the other products e.g. Earlbright are not affected by this change and should not be funded at the present time.

Dragon – Headset

When suppliers are quoting for Dragon you may see a headset listed on the quote. Although retail version of Dragon that you would buy from a shop will contain a headset in the box, the 'DSA' or 'OEM' versions that the suppliers purchase and supply, generally don't come with a headset. The only reason you would need to query a headset is if it is clear from the NAR/Quotes that two were being provided.

Adobe Cloud

Adobe Cloud is essentially the new way of obtaining the Adobe software previously sold on discs (e.g., Adobe CS5, Dreamweaver, etc). While boxed products of the existing versions of Adobe software (up to version 6) may still be available, Adobe have no plans to release future versions as boxed software, hence the Adobe Cloud service.

We can pay for this when Assessors are recommending it as course-specific software, so long as there is a clear disability related justification and costs are provided.

As this is classed as course-specific software so the caveat of course software for SpLD students would need to be taken into consideration.

This is a subscription service (pay-as-you-go monthly subscription or a pay-monthly annual commitment) so you may see recommendations for a monthly subscription that includes summer/Xmas/Easter holiday periods - this is fine to pay (as the student would have had access to this software were it still provided in disc form, and we do not limit other subscription services such as internet or Questia).

This would still be funded from the Equipment Allowance, despite it being a monthly subscription service. As it is a subscription service, we are expecting any claims for the cost of this to be received in the form of a student claim form for reimbursement, rather than an invoice from the provider. At present we are not aware of being able to pay a one-off cost for this service. Any eligible claim (i.e., agreed in the DSA2 letter) for this service would be reimbursed from the equipment allowance.

Update 06/11/2014:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Whilst recommendations for these items would not normally be fundable from the DSA they will be reviewed on their merit, however we want to clarify some points regarding this item.

We have recently seen recommendations to provide this equipment for students who suffer from migraines – with the justification being given, that it reduces photosensitivity and therefore the risk of the student developing migraines. It is felt that this justification is not specifically study related and this equipment would help the student to prevent migraines in everyday life.

To ensure that we as a department are showing a consistent approach for the time being we would ask that all recommendations for lamps are passed through the referral panel before they are agreed.

Please note cases where you are not agreeing to this equipment do not need to be referred to the panel.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As a student progresses on their course it is likely that updated versions of software, funded via the DSA, will become available. It is not our normal policy to fund upgrades to software, however we have recently seen recommendations for upgrades coming through from Assessment Centres. In light of this the issue was referred to the AT Subgroup for advice in November 2013.

Members of the AT Subgroup have confirmed that in some cases updates to Windows mean that software designed to specifically support students with Visual Impairment no longer works - software such as JAWS. Therefore their recommendation was that we fund upgrades to screen reading software for Visual Impairments. All other requests for upgrades must be supported by a disability related justification for the new feature/upgrade.

If you have any questions about the above please do not hesitate to ask.

Mac Update & Dragon

Apple have released a new upgrade to their operating system – Yosemite. This is a free upgrade. Unfortunately, Apple do not prompt users to check that their software will still work once the upgrade has been completed. It has been identified that Yosemite may stop older versions of Dragon Naturally Speaking from working correctly. From the information that we have so far it seems to be affecting version 3 and before, version 4 was only released in March 2014 so there is scope for this to have a significant impact.

We have been contacted by Needs Assessors with recommendations to help the students overcome the issues that this causes. The QAG suppliers solution is that they can return the computer back to the original operating system and reinstate Dragon - this is charged at £50-£100 and the student could do the Yosemite update again and we would be back to square one. Some Needs Assessors are therefore suggesting that the better solution would be to pay for the Dragon upgrade (to version 4) at a cost of around £50. This means that the software will work on Yosemite - no danger of any future issues.

This matter has been discussed with colleagues at BIS and Anthony Hill, and we have agreed that we do not consider it appropriate for any additional costs to be met by a student's DSA. Therefore in the first instance the student's should be asked to contact their QAG supplier for help in rectifying the issue.

Assistive Technology Update - Samson Go Mic/Audio Notetaker/Laptop and DVR

Over previous months we have started to see recommendations for students to be provided with a number of different pieces of equipment to allow them to record their lectures/seminars etc as part of strategies to overcome difficulties with note taking. The specific example of this is students who have been recommended a DVR (for seminars/tutorials) along with a Samson Go Mic and Audio Notetaker to be used with a laptop (lectures).

Although there were concerns about this being a duplication of support, as each strategy was recommended for specific instances, these were being accepted and the support agreed. We were going back to the Needs Assessor, however, to ask them to categorically confirm that they did not consider this to be a duplication of support.

Due to our concerns we referred this issue to the AT Subgroup for advice. This was discussed in their meeting in November 2013 and they have concluded that this should be considered as a duplication and therefore cannot be eligible for funding from the DSA. The rationale behind this is that it is considered that if the student cannot use their laptop, Samson Go Mic and Audio Notetaker in all situations they should be awarded a DVR instead – rather than two separate pieces of equipment.

Based on the advice from the AT Subgroup we have decided to review our response to these recommendations. To allow for Needs Assessors and Assessment Centres to take account of these changes, and the processing of already produced reports, this change will not take effect until May 2014.

For assessments which take place on or after the **12th May 2014** students should not be provided with equipment which provides two different strategies to overcome difficulties with note taking, except in exceptional circumstances.

[REDACTED]

Microsoft Visual Studio Software

We have been contacted by suppliers to advise that Microsoft have now made their Visual Studio software available for free to students. The product is course specific software which students on IT based courses can use to help them with programming. Going forward any quotes which include a cost for this software should be

referred back to the Needs Assessor. Due to the specialised nature of this product I expect that the instances of this being recommended will be small.

Vox Enable Software

This piece of software can be used in conjunction with Dragon Naturally Speaking to allow the user to control other software applications using only their voice.

The program allows voice commands to activate and control a range of other pieces of software; some examples are Inspiration, ClaroRead, Adobe and Zoomtext. The user can open, create, edit and export documents.

If disability related justification is given for this software then it can be funded via DSA. It should be noted that although it may be appropriate for a student with a physical difficulty it would not be an essential product for a student with a SpLD. The justification given should be carefully reviewed. If you are unsure whether it should be agreed please do not hesitate to see Amy Hedges (AT Specialist)

The product is for the Windows platform and costs around £25.

The NAR in Detail – Non-Medical Help

The purpose of NMH support is to assist the student in becoming an independent learner. The student can exercise their right to choose whomever they like to supply their NMH support. We need to be supportive of the student's choice; however we have to balance this with effective management of public funds.

We always look to pay for NMH support from the student's choice - if the cost difference is marginal. What would be classed as marginal would depend on the type of NMH support being received. If unsure what is classed as marginal then please refer to your TL for advice.

For NARs undertaken on 31st March 2014 later, and for new recommendations from this date, the NMH recommended must meet certain descriptors. Please refer [here](#) for more information.

Non Medical Helper Recommendations

There have been some occasions recently where Needs Assessors / Disability Advisers are recommending unusual NMH support which in some cases may not be deemed study/disability related and should not be funded.

Please take care when reviewing NMH recommendations. It is important to read what the support entails as it may be that some aspects of the support are therapy/medical support and shouldn't be funded. Try to take into account if this is required as a direct result of the student's disability, is it needed to complete the course, would all students need this regardless of disability.

Some examples which have been given are:

Non English Speaking Support / Language Support - English was the student's 2nd language. As this is not a direct result of a disability it was agreed it should not be funded.

Shorthand Tutoring - A requirement of the course was for students to produce work in shorthand, as this is something all students on this course would require it was deemed not suitable to be provided by DSA.

Presentation Skills - All students on the course were required to do presentations. It was deemed not disability related in this case.

Please note, we are not saying these types of support would never be funded and you should consider the full scenario before making your decision. If you are unsure call the Needs Assessor and discuss this with them to try and get a better understanding, refer the case to your TL or ask for it to be raised in the referral panel.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Travel Costs for Non-Medical Helpers – we will not agree to fund travel costs for Non-Medical Helpers as this should be built into their business costs. However, there may be exceptions to this, for example when it is a specialised type of support. Please refer to your TL for advice.

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Blended NMH Support - AT Training and Study Skills

It has been brought to light that blended support of AT Training and Study Skills has been recommended by [REDACTED]. This has been referred to Management and to BIS for their view and it has been decided we would not support this request and the following text was issued [REDACTED] regarding this support:

We understand the role of an AT trainer and a Study Skills tutor to be completely separate and a clear distinction has always been made between the two. AT training is ordinarily time bound to a number of sessions and linked to providing a programme of training for the specialist software and hardware, whereas study skills support tends to be a longer term arrangement.

We expect a recommendation for AT training to be indicated separately in the Needs Assessment report and supported by 2 quotes (this does not preclude a study skills provider being one of the named suppliers, if they have the appropriate skill to deliver the training). This has been recently reinforced through correspondence which hopefully has made it's way to your HEI by now. The correspondence confirms that we are reviewing the current exemptions in place from our NMH policy and sets out that exemption from the 2 quote system will no longer extend to Assistive Technology training. In all circumstances, we will require 2 competitive quotes.

Apologies, but our requirement is that if study skills and AT training is being recommended, then we would expect to see a separate recommendation for each and this to be invoiced in a way which allows us to track the delivery of support in line with the recommended hours (as is the accepted practise).

I am not personally aware of any other Assessment centres recommending 'blended support' and it is not something that has ever been discussed at any meetings I have been involved in with Stakeholders. I will be raising this for discussion in meetings planned in for March.

Another Assessment Centre where this has been recommended is [REDACTED]
Following this, please refer any recommendation for such 'blended' support back to the Assessment Centre to request individual quotes.

Also following this some of the recommendations were for "32 hours per year plus 8 per year for the holidays if required" It has been agreed in these instances we are fine to accept 40 hours per year without needing to question this. This would also apply to other types of NMH.

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[illegible]

Gender	Percentage
Men	85%
Women	80%

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Exam Support

It has been agreed that in cases where the NAR states “Exam Support TBC” an initial amount of 15 hours per academic year can be agreed in all cases. Please insert the standard paragraph from the Appendix into the table on page 1 of the DSA2 letter.

Invigilator/Technical Support for exams

This is not something that can be funded via the DSA. The responsibility for providing this type of support lies with the HEI. It should not be agreed within the DSA2 letter.

Course Specific Tutoring

We cannot agree to fund course specific tutoring from the DSA as this may give disabled students an advantage over other students on the course. It should not be agreed within the DSA2 letter.

AT Training on Course Specific Software

DSA cannot be used to fund training on course specific software. Where a specific piece of software is required to be used on the course all students would need to use this and therefore we can not pay for training on this.

Super Reading Course

This is a specific course [REDACTED] (though other formats have been seen). The super reading course is sometimes recommended within a NAR, generally only for dyslexic students – though please note that other disabilities may have this recommended. Following managements review it was decided that DSA can be used to fund this support, from the Non-Medical Helpers Allowance, so long as it is justified in the NAR. The costs of this would be paid from the NMH allowance and would be paid from the academic year in which the support was taken.

UPDATE 29/04/2014

The Super Reading course does not fall under any of the agreed activity descriptors which have recently been published in the NMH Manual (effective for NARs undertaken on 31/03/14 or later, and for new recommendations from this date). As such we cannot currently agree to any new recommendations for this support to be funded via the DSA. If you receive a recommendation for this support please advise that it is currently under review and that we cannot agree to fund it at this time. A further update will follow once this possible exception has been reviewed by DSA Management.

Social Mentoring

We have received clarity that students that have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder can be funded for Social Mentoring through the DSA's. This had previously been misunderstood to be the provision of the HEI. However we are able to fund.

Moodswings

Upon review it has now been confirmed that MoodSwings support **can** be funded via DSA. The support that is offered does fall in line with the Specialist Mentor NMH descriptor and as long as the correct term is used within the recommendation MoodSwings can be confirmed as a supplier of this support.

Additional Specific Language Support

It has been highlighted recently that [REDACTED] have been recommending Additional Language Support to address the Dyslexic difficulties of short term memory and processing speeds.

Following review it has been concluded that the Additional Specific Language Support is considered as extra academic support which is subject specific therefore not fundable through disabled student allowances. Institutions should therefore make reasonable adjustments to provide and meet the associated costs for extra academic tuition as would be available to all students.

Remote AT Training

Remote AT Training (often using Skype) is OK to accept however there must be a minimum of 2 like for like AT Training Quotes that both provide this service.

Irlen Syndrome/Colour Sensitivity/Visual Stress

If it has been recommended in the NAR that the student is funded for Irlen Syndrome, Colour Sensitivity or Visual Stress then the agreement should be left in the table on page 1 of the DSA2 letter. The paragraph relating to this can be added to the 'Next Steps' section.

The standard paragraph should be entered regardless of what is recommended within the NAR as the support that we are able to provide from the DSA is consistent irrespective of the type of diagnosis in the NAR.

Students who provide evidence of Irlen Syndrome/Colour Sensitivity/Visual Stress only are not eligible for a Study Needs Assessment and advised they are only eligible for:
Colorimetry Testing
Overlays
Tinting
Non Prescription Lenses
£30 towards the cost of frames.

We cannot pay for the Initial Assessment or Prescription Lenses.

Click here to open the [GUIDE FOR IRLENS within this Matrix](#). There is also the [FAQs document](#) available on the Practitioners website.

Omni Read

It is sometimes recommended within an NAR that support from Omni Read is agreed from the DSA. This is a specialised company that perform testing in relation to visual stress. It normally involves three sessions at £100 each. As this is not a diagnosis we can agree to fund this via the DSA.

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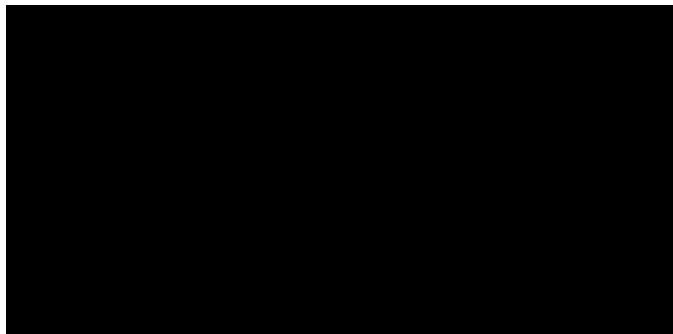
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Study Skills Group Sessions

Following on from the introduction of the NMH Manual, we have been asked if Study Skills Group Sessions will be funded through DSAs. It has been confirmed that this **will not** fall under the remit of DSA as it is not in-line with the new role descriptors in the NMH Manual, therefore we will no longer accept recommendations for Study Skills Group Sessions.

Any students who already have this support agreed in their DSA2 Letter will continue to have this funded, but new recommendations should be declined.

The NAR in Detail – General Allowance

Effective from academic year 2013/14 the cost of the study needs assessment will be met from the General Allowance, rather than the non-medical helper allowance as has previously been the case. Please see here for more details.

What we agree must match what has been recommended in the NAR (examples are given at the bottom of general allowance guidance document). We require disability related justification and costs for everything we're going to agree to. This justification and costs extends to items like CDs, batteries, Wall Planners and highlighters, these can be agreed to as long as we have sufficient disability related justification and a price. If no recommendation for support has been entered into section C but a cost has been given in section D, this application must be pended and disability related justification requested from the assessment centre.

NOTE: *The exception to this rule is when consumables have been recommended (Printer Consumables such as Ink Cartridges & Paper and batteries for a digital recorder). With these we can accept little or no justification, as long as we have agreed to provide the student with a Printer and Digital Recorder. The reasoning behind*

*this is that we would not want to provide the student with a device without the means to support this strategy.
(from the Bulletin on 24/04/2012)*

Justification can be provided over the phone but this must be backed up in an email as well.

There is no requirement to list what printer consumables are on the DSA2 letter (for clarity they are Paper and Ink Cartridges – the student and the claims team will know this).

If an assessor has included a recommendation in section C but no costs have been included in section D we should be going out for the cost of this (this can be accepted over the phone but make sure to note the portal clearly with details of your call). If you are unable to obtain the cost over the phone and need to email the assessment centre the application will need to be pending in line with current procedures.

Regarding Questia, this can be agreed to by Officers and will be paid from the standard Non Core Textbooks allowance. There is no need to reference this recommendation in the DSA2 letter as this will just come from the Book allowance. This shouldn't come up too often as there are only a few Assessment Centres who recommend this support.

For clarification, if eBooks have been recommended in section C along with Books, we do not need to reference these in the DSA2 letter. They are simply a part of the 'Non Core Textbooks' and will be paid from this allowance by the claims team.

If any specific books are recommended and given separate costs for reimbursement (i.e. not included in the equipment quotes) then these should be listed in and paid from the General Allowance, not the Equipment Allowance. (e.g. Up to £25 for Cite them Rite or £15 for Study Skills Handbook)

Please see a list of examples available as part of the [general allowance guidance document](#).

Non-Core Textbooks

All recommendations made in this section should be reviewed based on merit. For example, it is not standard practice to agree to fund core textbooks (ones that all students are required to buy) from the DSA. However, if the assessor has given justification of why these are needed and should be purchased from the DSA we are able to agree to them.

Questia

It has been confirmed that the fee for this service can be paid for as part of the recommended Book Allowance.

Questia is an online library which requires a membership fee (per year) to join and then you can select books/research material/journals to 'rent' online. A major benefit of this is that because the reading material is electronic it can work with Assistive Software such as Text to Speech. Looking at the texts that are available they do not appear to have novels or other books that you may consider as entertainment/personal reading.

There are only a few Assessment Centres that recommend this service and as they include this as part of the Book Allowance in the NAR, we do not need to add any additional information to the DSA2 letter. The general agreement for a Book Allowance can cover this. Looking at a few examples of the recommendation for this, it is always built into the recommendation for Non Core Books and has a cost of £50 per year.

Information for the Claims Team

We can refund this from the Book Allowance (where a book allowance is recommended and agreed). Students would need to send in evidence that they have paid this amount before it is refunded. Although this service would not be specifically listed on the DSA2 letter it is ok to accept as it is just another format of an ebook.

If at any point we are unhappy or need further clarification on what books a student is renting from this service we can ask for a print out of the account which will show a list of rented titles.

Library 'Click and Collect' System

The 'click and collect' approach allows students to order a book to be ready to collect from the library, this means they do not have to use the library search functions or look through the shelves to find the book they need. Although generally available to all students, it is of more benefit to a student with a disability or an SpLD. It is often a suitable alternative to library support, and as it is normally a free service it reduces the impact on a student's NMH allowance and wouldn't represent a cost to DSA in most cases.

Library Postage Systems

This allows a student to order a book to be delivered to their address from the University Library, and allows them to return the same book by post. The service itself is free (i.e., no charge for the University spending time sourcing the books), but the postage of the book to and from the student would be paid for by the student. In the case of a student in receipt of DSA, where this kind of support is recommended and justified in the NAR, it is acceptable to fund this from the student's general allowance. (There may be exceptions, for example, some distance learning courses where it may be reasonable to expect any student to have to have books sent by post as they may live some distance from the library).

Currently there does not seem to be many Universities offering this, and fewer still where it is recommended in a NAR and, unlike 'click and collect' initiatives, the postage scheme is generally only for use by those students registered with their Universities Disability Advice Service.

Sheffield University is a good example of how this system works and info for this service can be found here <http://shef.ac.uk/library/services/postal>

In most cases, a student would fund the use of this service by topping up their online University account (used for printing/copying etc). To claim reimbursement from DSA, a student could forward us a copy of their online account showing the credits made, in the same way they would when [reclaiming the cost of printing or photocopying](#).

Costs for iPod/iPad Apps

We may see a recommendation for a cost/allowance towards apps in general, e.g., £50 per year towards apps for helping with time management/organization. This shouldn't be agreed, since the iPod/iPad comes pre-installed with calendar, memo functions etc (see above). Funding for an allowance towards assistive technology apps may be considered (see iPad guidance above), but it would be preferable to consider an actual recommendation for a specific app/apps, e.g., '£4.99 to purchase the Pages Word Processing app on the iPad so that the student can continue to work on coursework when they do not have easy access to their computer' (we may see something like this when we have a student with a severe disability who spends a lot of time in bed or in hospital and can't access their computer).

Examples of Apps

Click [here](#) for some examples of apps that may be recommended through DSAs.

Internet Dongles

We will not agree to fund the cost of internet dongles or other set up costs from the DSA. If this is recommended within the NAR please ensure that you make it clear within the DSA2 that it will not be covered by the DSA. [Click here to go to the INTERNET GUIDANCE SECTION](#).

Recommendations for Food/snack Allowance

We sometimes receive recommendations to fund food/snack allowances or catered accommodation from the DSA. We are not able to provide funding for this from the DSA. This is because the DSA is to fund additional costs and all students would need to feed themselves at university. Food cost is not a study related need; this is a lifestyle concern. This is always going to be applicable whether an individual is studying or not. Please ensure that you make it clear within the DSA2 letter why this cannot be funded.

Recommendations for Gym Membership

We have, on occasion, seen recommendations that gym membership should be provided. The argument being that the student needs to "maintain a healthy lifestyle" to manage their condition.

Under no circumstance should this be agreed and funded through the DSAs. Gym memberships are not a study related need; these are lifestyle concerns. They are always going to be applicable whether an individual is studying or not and everyone is personally responsible for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Accommodation

We are able to fund the difference in cost between standard accommodation and that which is required by a student as a direct result of their disability.

It must be made clear within the DSA2 letter which academic years the agreement for accommodation relates to. If it is not clear from the NAR assume that it is for year 1 only and add in the second section from the appendix.

The majority of accommodation recommendations see a request for the difference between en suite and non ensuite, and is generally for year 1, when the student is in hall of residence. The reason it is generally for year one is because there are comparable prices, which can be obtained, for ensuite and non ensuite, to enable us to calculate any additional cost.

In most cases you would agree the accommodation for year 1. The relevant paragraph in the Appendix allows you to do this and asks that they contact us in year 2 onwards, if this is required in future years. This will then allow us to recalculate the amount for year 2 onwards, if this is required. Please note when students move into private accommodation there is often no comparable costs that can be obtained for ensuite and non ensuite, so there are occasions where we can't fund this.

On some occasions the Disability Adviser/Needs Assessor/Student may try to provide comparable costs for private accommodation but unless they (ensuite and non ensuite comparable) are in the same property that the student is living, we would not usually accept these. Private accommodation prices can vary even within the same street, so prices should not be compared against other properties as the student will have chosen a particular place based on their limits and what they can afford. If there are comparable costs within the same property then usually the landlord can confirm how much rent is being paid for the different room types which would allow us to make the calculation.

Under no circumstances would you agree to award the same amount for years 2 and onwards that was given in year 1 without performing a new calculation (unless the student is staying in the same halls).

If you have any complex cases please speak to your Team Leader or ask for the case to be taken to the referral panel.

Ergo Pens/Ergo Pen Grips

Please see [here](#) for information about ergo pens/ergo pen grips

The NAR in Detail – Travel Allowance

We are able to fund additional travel costs that a student incurs as a direct result of their disability.

If travel is recommended please outline what has been agreed in the table on the first page of the DSA2 letter (using standard paragraphs in the appendix).

Public Transport Costs (PTC)

These must be deducted from taxi and petrol/mileage costs.

Free travel Pass – the public transport costs must still be deducted regardless of whether a student is entitled to or has a free travel pass. The exception to this would be where the free pass is because of the age of the student in question, rather than their disability, i.e., if the student has a Pensioner free travel pass. The reason being that such a student would still have their pensioner free pass regardless of their disability.

Walking Distance – please use a common sense approach when it comes to needs assessors stating that public transport should not be deducted as the distance is walking distance. There is nothing in the guidance to suggest what this distance would be so common sense should be applied.

Also we should also be taking into consideration any information the Needs Assessor / Disability Officer may have on their local area. A situation has occurred where the route planner on a website suggested a journey was just over few miles but by using public footpaths/pedestrian only zones (town centres/shopping centres) the distance reduced considerably. These public footpaths may not be shown on the route planner unless there is an option to view a walking route but due to the local knowledge of the DO this is the route that would be taken.

If it is suggested that there is no Public Transport you are able to check a website such as travel line to determine if there is any local public transport. Please note if there is you should check if there is a walk to get the bus and the walk from the bus to the HEI. If this totals more than it would to walk the direct journey then this would be considered unreasonable for someone to make this journey via the bus and public transport may not need to be taken.

If a Needs Assessor has stated that PTC should not be taken off in the NAR but it has subsequently been decided that they should have the PTC cost deducted please ensure that this is stated in the DSA2 letter so that the student is fully aware of the situation.

We cannot accept concession costs where the concessionary rate is due to disability. We can however accept concession rates/free pass for pensioners. We can also accept costs for 'Cash Saver' tickets (i.e. yearly passes) and student passes. Should a price for one of these be provided as the PTC then we would need to reduce it down to find the price per day to work out how much needs to be deducted. Therefore a yearly ticket would need to be divided by 365 to get a daily cost.

Nor would we accept any travel allowance recommending that students purchase their own car. As the cost of a car could not be attributed to the actual costs of their study, any recommendations should be turned down.

HEI free bus service - when the HEI are providing a free bus for students to get to the HEI, it would be reasonable for us to ask the question if they have any provision in place for those disabled students who are unable to access the bus. However, they are under no obligation to do so, so we shouldn't be saying that it is the HEI's responsibility to cover the travel.

If the HEI do not have any provision in place then the DSAs could be used to cover the additional travel expenses the disabled student will have and there may not be an equivalent public transport cost to deduct as the non disabled student could use the free bus.

Congestion / Toll charges

Some students may be required as a result of a disability to use their own car to travel to and from the institution. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between public transport costs and the cost of the same journey by car.

For the purpose of deciding the cost of the journey by car, it is recommended that the cost of the journey is calculated by using the midpoint range of AA motoring costs which includes an element for wear and tear on the car, toll and congestion charges. Therefore, SFE would not reimburse the student separately for congestion / toll charges, in addition to the agreed mid point range cost (28p per mile in 2013/14 academic year, 29p per mile in 2014/15 academic year).

Eligible for travel but not entitled

There are situations where the PTC is higher than the cost incurred by the student. E.g. travelling to the HEI by car is cheaper than getting the bus. In this case it should be made clear to the student in the DSA2 letter that although they are eligible for DSA the entitlement is £0. In some cases it may be worth showing how you have arrived at this in your letter.

Travel to Medical Appointments – pre 2013-14

We can fund the additional cost that a student incurs to attend medical appointments from the DSA (this may be by public transport). We would however, only be able to fund the additional cost. Such costs would be funded from the General Allowance.

For example if a student's home address is in Leeds, they study in Newcastle but they are required to attend a medical appointment in London the DSA could only fund the journey from Newcastle to Leeds, as the journey between Leeds and London would need to be made regardless of whether they were a student. In these cases, additional evidence of the travel may be required e.g. a doctor's letter confirming the appointment.

Travel to Medical Appointments – 2013-14 onwards

For the academic year 2013/14 onwards, DSA will no longer be used to pay for travel to and from medical appointments or to/from home (e.g., to access support network). This will apply to new and continuing students from academic year 2013/14 – other than in those cases where study needs assessment recommendations to the contrary have already been agreed in a DSA2 letter.

Travel to placements/fieldtrips etc – pre 2013/14

Please note that we only fund additional costs to work placement/fieldtrips/visits etc, if all students are required to arrange their own transportation. If the HEI is providing transport for all other students then it is their responsibility to also provide suitable transport for the disabled students. If it is not clear within the NAR how all other students will be travelling please query this before making the agreement.

Any travel that is not between the student's Term Time address and HEI must be paid from the General Allowance. This includes travel to placements, field trips, visits etc. Please be aware that as the General Allowance has a threshold and this additional travel may exceed the allowance – this should be referenced in the DSA2 letter.

Travel to placements/fieldtrips etc – 2013/14 onwards

Please note that we only fund additional costs to work placement/fieldtrips/visits etc, if all students are required to arrange their own transportation. If the HEI is providing transport for all other students then it is their responsibility to also provide suitable transport for the disabled students. If it is not clear within the NAR how all other students will be travelling please query this before making the agreement.

For the academic year 2013/14 onwards, travel to work placement will be paid from the Travel Allowance. This will apply to new and continuing students from academic year 2013/14 – other than in those cases where study needs assessment recommendations to the contrary have already been agreed in a DSA2 letter.

For the academic year 2013/14 onwards, students travel costs with regard to fieldtrips/visits will be paid from the Travel Allowance; any travel costs associated with a non-medical helper (NMH) as a result of the trip will be paid from the NMH allowance. This will apply to new and continuing students from academic year 2013/14 – other than in those cases where study needs assessment recommendations to the contrary have already been agreed in a DSA2 letter.

Travel while on Work Placement (to visit clients)

A recommendation received for us to pay for travel for a student who was on placement and, as part of this placement, needed to go out and visit clients at different locations should not be met by DSA.

This will be the placement provider's responsibility to provide this, to ensure their staff can get to and from these visits.

We can continue to pay to travel to and from the placement at the start and end of the day, but travel in between to see clients would not be met from DSA.

An example email reply regarding travel while on work placement – please note that this is only to illustrate some logic behind the decision, the e-mail **should not** be copied verbatim into your replies.:

As I'm sure you appreciate, while Disabled Students' Allowances are tailored to individual need, BIS and SLC are accountable for this expenditure. We therefore need to ensure that the rules are applied fairly and consistently, and in a way that offers value for money for the taxpayer. This includes not authorising expenditure when there is another system in place such as another Government scheme or a reasonable adjustment that could properly be used to support the student, thereby reserving the DSA budget for circumstances where there is no such additional support available to students. In 2010/11, the last year for which full figures were available, the Government spent almost £110m on additional support for full-time students through DSA. This is a considerable sum and one which, as well as directly benefitting students, benefits HEIs by relieving some of the financial pressure that might otherwise fall on them to make a range of reasonable adjustments to support students.

However, while this does demonstrate that DSAs are a significant success story, as with all types of Government expenditure there is only a limited budget set aside for this purpose. While the budget allowance for DSA increases year on year to take account of increased demand, our forecasts suggest that we will also overspend on this budget for each year of this spending round. This means that we must consider very carefully each new proposed use for DSAs which would place new pressures on this budget. Unfortunately it also means that, practically, any new expenditure must be matched by a corresponding decrease in expenditure elsewhere in the budget.

I understand your argument that placement providers take on students voluntarily, which makes it different to taking on a paid employee. However I agree with SFE that employers do have a responsibility to make a reasonable adjustment when they accept placement students. In the event that the adjustment is not deemed reasonable, due perhaps to additional cost, then I also contend that the HEI bears a responsibility to ensure that all students it accepts onto the course can complete all compulsory elements, including placements. DSA has already borne some of the additional cost of ensuring this student can attend HE by covering costs to and from the placement. Depending on the circumstances, this could include travel to the first client visit and away to the student's home at the end of the day, in the event that the student wasn't using the placement provider's office as a base on that day. However it cannot be extended to cover other travel during the placement day.

You note in your exchange with SFE that there is no guidance to state that this cost cannot be covered by DSA. As I'm sure you'll appreciate, the SFE guidance cannot cover every possible eventuality. If an issue is not explicitly addressed in guidance then assessors are required to interpret the existing guidelines. Where this occurs, SFE will often consider with BIS whether there is a case for clarifying the guidance on the issue, as we have done in this case. The updated guidance is now clear that travel can be covered through DSA to and from the placement provider, as a proxy for the student travelling to and from the HEI. However it will not cover travel during the placement day.

I hope that this demonstrates that we have seriously considered the circumstances set out, but unfortunately in this case it is not possible to extend the reach of DSA to cover the additional travel required for this student's placement. I'm sure that you and HE have already considered all options open to this student but I hope it is also helpful to point to the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA - soon to be replaced with Personal Independence Payments or PIPs) which this student may consider applying for as a form of additional support for his day to day activities, given the mobility requirements you have described.

2014/15 Policy Change – Travel Allowance

Please see [here](#) for details of the policy change for 2014/15 travel allowance, whereby we are required to obtain details of whether a student is in receipt of Higher Rate/Enhanced Rate DLA/PIP. This would only be for new students in 14/15 or new recommendations for 14/15.

Parking Costs at HEI's

These are not covered by DSA. It is the HEI's responsibility to accommodate disabled students with appropriate parking on campus.

Travel to Study Needs Assessment

If a Needs Assessor has recommended that the student should be reimbursed for travel **by car** to the Needs Assessment then we should be reimbursing the student when we process the DSA2 letter and include it in the **General Allowance** section – see [DSANOEAPPENDIX-NEW](#) for the text to use. We do not require receipts for this support, as we would take the word of the Needs Assessor on the distance travelled by the student.

If travel costs by **bus/train/taxi** (or any paid travel, other than car mileage) etc, have been provided for in the report then we would also look to pay this to the student and detail this in the **General Allowance** section of the DSA2 letter. For travel by bus/train, etc, we do require receipts as with any other travel claim. Some Needs Assessors may include photocopies of the receipts within the NAR, these can be accepted if this is the case. However if no details have been included in the needs assessment report then the student would have to complete a claim form to have this cost reimbursed.

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Assessor recommendations for Specific Suppliers

SFE expect recommendations to be linked to meet the specific needs of the student, but do accept that it may be appropriate in some circumstances to recommend specific suppliers over others i.e. no other supplier can offer that particular product/service which is a requirement to meet the student's need. There may also be cases where the student makes a specific request to use the specified supplier. All recommendations are considered on a case by case basis.

Example

It has been raised that a number of Needs Assessments have been received for students with a Visual Impairment and only one quote has been provided for the Equipment and AT Training. In the cases that have been identified the justification given in the NAR for this was "This assessment is for a visual impairment and as such only one quote is provided." Other justification has suggested that some suppliers are not as well equipped to supply equipment and training for VI students, however this is not backed up and appears to be based on opinion and reputation as we know of other suppliers who can provide this.

Please note this justification should not be accepted and additional quotes should be requested. Advice has been requested from DSA QAG:

"DSA QAG Suppliers are classified as 'One Stop shop' which means they are required to provide all equipment and service requests inclusive of training. There is no reason why other QAG Suppliers should not quote for VI training."

Our internal Quote Selection Process (available in Forms and Guides- [DSA Process - Quote Selection](#)) also states "It may be appropriate in some circumstances to recommend specific suppliers over others i.e. no other supplier can offer that particular product/service which is a requirement to meet the students need."

Unless the items that are being requested have been identified that no other supplier can provide this item or the training, we should look to receive the full amount of quotes.

Specialist equipment e.g. ergonomic

For recommendations for specialist equipment we only require 1 quote and therefore we would agree to the quote in the NAR.

Cost

Should all quotes be like for like (no missing items, same specification) and there are no specific recommendations then we would look at the most cost effective quote as there should be no difference in the service provided from each of the suppliers.

AT Training with Equipment

Should there be three equipment quotes with three AT Training quotes from these suppliers, previous practice was to add these together to find the combined cost as this would make it easier for the student having both equipment and training from one supplier (One Stop Shop). However, for Needs Assessments undertaken on 1st March 2013 and later, we will no longer apply this process. Instead we would look to choose the most cost effective equipment supplier and then choose the most cost effective AT training quote. Please refer to the [relevant section](#) about this within this Matrix, or please read the [quote selection document](#) which details the process in full.

Preferred NMH provider (including AT training)

As per the decision matrix and guidance on the Practitioners' website - "The student can exercise their right to choose whomever they like to supply their NMH support. We need to be supportive of the student's choice; however we have to balance this with effective management of public funds. We always look to pay for NMH support from the student's choice - if the cost difference is marginal."

What would be classed as marginal would depend on the type of NMH support being received. If the cost difference is up to £5.00 per hour, we can accept that the difference is marginal and agree to the changes. Otherwise we will need to refer the request to Anthony Hill via Team Leader for advice.

Please find [here](#) a list of scenarios which should help with understanding and decision making.

If quotes are equal in cost, which supplier is chosen?

It is very unlikely that we would ever receive three like for like quotes for equipment which are all the same price, however if we did, we would choose any quote from the SNA at random as there would be no deciding factor. If we receive two Non Medical Help quotes at the same cost again we would pick one of the quotes. We would look at the gross cost and make a decision based on this figure.

Click on the following link to open the [DSA Process Map - Quote Selection v3.0.ppt](#)



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[illegible]

Student attended two NARs

If a student attends two NARs as a result of:

Receiving additional DSA1

We cannot process the second NAR however we will pay the assessment fee.

You need to refer the case to Anthony Hill / [REDACTED] via your Team Leader prior to taking action below.

In this instance, the Entitlement Team would need to contact the student over the phone to explain the situation and to check the reasons for the student attending another NAR, and follow it up by sending DSA2SECONDNAR to advise that we are unable to process the NAR from [second access centre's name] because the student has already had an assessment of needs and has been issued a Needs Assessment Report.

If CTS has been provided a copy should be sent to the second Access Centre so they are fully aware of the situation.

A clear note should be left on student's record to confirm that:

DSA A/Y
NAR received [case id] and unable to process
Student attended second NAR- DSA1 [REDACTED]
First NAR already/awaiting to be processed.
A letter sent to the student to advise.

***** When NAR invoice is received for NAR from [second access centre's name], please
pay*****

We should be proactive in assisting the student with arranging new recommendations / support if that is needed. We will advise the student in the letter that if further support is needed the student needs to contact the Needs Assessor who carried out the first report or student's Disability Adviser for further recommendations if applicable. We do not need to review the second NAR.

Student decides to attend another assessment that has NOT been agreed by SFE:

We cannot process the second NAR and we will **not** pay the assessment fee.

You need to refer the case to Anthony Hill / [REDACTED] via your Team Leader prior to taking action below.

In this instance, the Entitlement Team would need to contact the student over the phone to explain the situation and to check the reasons for the student attending another NAR, and follow it up by sending DSA2SECONDNAR to advise that we are unable to process the NAR any further because the student has already attended a different one.

If CTS has been provided a copy should be sent to the second Access Centre so they are fully aware of the situation.

A clear note should be left on student's record to confirm that:

*DSA A/Y
NAR received [case id] and unable to process.
Student attended second NAR out of choice.
First NAR already/awaiting to be processed.
A letter sent to the student to advise.*

***** When NAR invoice is received for NAR from [second access centre's name], please do not pay *****

We should be proactive in assisting the student with arranging new recommendations / support if that is needed. We will advise the student in the letter that if further support is needed the student needs to contact the Needs Assessor who carried out the first report or student's Disability Adviser for further recommendations if applicable.

DSA for students on a placement

Guidance confirms that **college and university staff must take into account a person's disability when arranging work placements and liaise with the work placement providers to implement the support...The providers of work placements are required to ensure that they do not have discriminatory practices and also to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people on a work placement. The length of the work placement may be a factor when determining whether an adjustment is reasonable.**

For example, DSAs could pay for additional disability related travel costs to and from the institution, and the additional support required for course work undertaken during the work placement. When a student is going on a work placement as part of their course, the DSA needs assessment should take this into account and, for example, consider the portability of equipment if students need to take it with them on the placement.

If you receive a request / recommendation for DSA support for a student which is on a placement, please:

Check the number of weeks the student is in attendance at the HEI and type of the placement to determine if the student is eligible to DSA support (please refer to the [Eligibility Section, Students on Placement](#), for the criteria of eligible students on a placement)

Find out details of the placement (how long it is for, how many placement periods there will be and if the provider and location is the same for all of them)

Check whether the placement provider is able to make an adjustment for the student. If the placement provider confirms that, due to the length of the work placement, they are unable to make the required change, we would consider funding the support through DSA. Please refer to referral panel for a decision.

Example: If we receive a recommendation for support to be used on a placement (such as accessible phone, keyboard, chair, etc.) we would expect the placement provider to make a reasonable adjustment and provide

the student with accessible equipment. However, we do take the length of the work placement into account when determining whether an adjustment is reasonable. As such, we would expect that the person making recommendation has confirmed if the placement provider has been contacted to check if they are prepared to make an adjustment for that student. If the placement provider confirms that, due to the length of the work placement (we should be informed what the length is), they are unable to make the required change, we would consider funding the support through DSA. Please refer to referral panel for a decision.

Please also see the following sections within this Matrix:

[Travel to placements/fieldtrips etc](#)

[Travel while on Work Placement \(to visit clients\)](#)

DSA for NHS Students

Health care students in receipt or eligible to claim an NHS Bursary are not entitled to DSA support from SFE and would need to apply to the NHS for DSA support, unless they are studying to be a medical doctor or dentist.

A full list of courses that are eligible to receive NHS support – and therefore should apply to the NHS for their DSA support as well – can be found in the [Eligibility section by clicking here](#).

The following **undergraduate** courses are 5 or 6 years long and would usually be eligible for DSA support from SFE for only the first 4 years. In years 5 & 6 they are entitled to a NHS Bursary, so would not be entitled to DSA support from SFE.

Clinical Medicine	BM B.CH (OXON)
Dental Surgery	BDS
Medical	MBCHB / MBBS / BSC
Medicine	M.B.B.CHIR / MBCHB / MBBS

NOTE: these above course are undergraduate-entry. **For Graduate-entry** Dental and Medicine courses (where a student enters after already obtaining a degree), they will only be entitled to DSA support in Year 1 of the Graduate entry degree and will apply to the NHS for year 2 onwards.

NHS Secondees

[Click here for info on NHS secondees.](#)

NARs for NHS Students

NHS students who have been deemed to be eligible for DSA from SFE (i.e. secondees) should have their NARs reviewed in exactly the same way as all other students.

However, there are a number of students who will receive their DSA from us initially and then from the NHS in subsequent years of their course. In this instance the relevant section for the appendix should be entered below the table on the first page of the DSA2 letter.

Specialist equipment quotes for NHS Students

We can accept equipment quotes with warranty and insurance covering the full length of the course (i.e., the period with SFE and the period with NHS). We do not need to request revised quotes to only cover the period of eligibility with SFE. However, if the quote given does not cover **at least** the length of the SFE period we must request new quotes to cover at least this period of time.

Additional Recommendations

We can accept further recommendations with sufficient justification from a Study Needs Assessor or Disability Adviser depending on what the additional recommendation is. Further information within this Matrix, regarding agreeing to additional NMH support can be found [here](#).

We can accept recommendations from Study Needs Assessors for the following:

- Specialist Equipment
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Travel
- NMH Support
- Consumables/internet/books/overlays/reading rulers
- Additional costs for accommodation

We can accept recommendations from Disability Advisers for the following:

- General Allowance
- New recommendations for NMH Support (NOT AT TRAINING)
- Increase of NMH Support (NOT AT TRAINING)
- Changes to previously agreed travel
- Notification of accommodation costs where a recommendation for contribution to accommodation costs has already been agreed but we need to know details of costs involved (as per text used in DSA2 letter)

We can accept recommendations from Suppliers for the following:

- Increase in NMH support (NOT AT TRAINING)

Please note as of 17th September 2012 any recommendations for AT Training/ additional hour requests for AT Training must come from Needs Assessors.

For new recommendations from 31st March 2014 onwards, the NMH recommended must meet certain descriptors. Please refer [here](#) for more information.

Additional points:

Recommendation from Disability Adviser or Needs Assessor for a replacement laptop battery

When the old laptop battery has broken, we can accept recommendation for a replacement one. We do not need to ask for a full justification as we already have justification for this item. This can come from a Needs Assessor or Disability Adviser.

An email received from the student with forwarded recommendation email from an assessor

Recommendation should come directly from the study needs assessor. We could contact the assessor over the phone to confirm what has been recommended.

An email received from an assessor with forwarded recommendation email from the student

Justification for support recommended needs to come from an assessor. If in their email, assessor clearly confirms that they are agreeing with the justification below, we are fine to accept it.

Recommendation for support as per psychologists report

If we receive recommendation for support and in their email, Assessor or Disability Adviser, say that the support is as per justification in the student's psychologist's report and that justification in the report is sufficient, we can accept it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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