

COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

This document is intended to answer questions from stakeholders relating to operational queries for Student Finance England (SFE). It does not aim to give organisations advice or instruction on how they should be responding to the situation. These arrangements are exceptional and are subject to change.

Applications

Can SFE make any adjustments for those students who cannot get section 5 of the full application completed by their HEP?

Yes. We understand that it is unlikely to be possible for our customers to get this section of their application completed by their HEP during this time. We will therefore be able to accept an email from a student's HEP (from a university email address) in lieu of a signed and stamped section 5. The email must confirm the following; Academic Year, Course Name, Course Start Date, Course End Date, Year of Study e.g. Year 2 of 3, Mode of Study e.g. FT or PT, Intensity of study i.e. 50% of full time equivalent – We **must** have this information for part-time students and Level of Study e.g. Undergraduate or Postgraduate.

Please note section 5 information is only a requirement for students who are applying for DSA only on an undergraduate course and those applying for a part-time or postgraduate courses.

Needs Assessments

Can needs assessments be carried out remotely?

Yes, needs assessments can be carried out remotely. There is no need to seek prior authorisation for this from SFE. Remote assessments can be carried out if this is down to student preference or because of a change in business practices initiated by the particular centre. The location of the assessment on the NAR template can be recorded as "Remote Assessment" or similar. To be clear a student does not have to have a remote assessment if they do not feel comfortable with that. In these cases the student would need to wait to have a face to face assessment until the advice from the government changes.

Can needs assessments be carried out by email?

We do not think that it is possible to provide effective support via email. It is acceptable to carry out assessments over the phone or via a method of video call.

Can ergonomic assessments be carried out remotely?

SFE does not believe that an effective ergonomic assessment can be carried out remotely and therefore these should not take place remotely. We understand that this will mean that these will need to be suspended until government advice changes.

Can need assessments be sent without PGP encryption?

No. It would not be best practice to remove processes which help satisfy GDPR requirements. If Assessment Centre staff are moving to a model of working from home, we would ask that PGP software is installed on their machine to allow this process can continue. If you require a copy of the SFE Needs Assessment PGP Key please email dsa_requests@slc.co.uk

Non-Medical Help

How will cancelled sessions of non-medical help be dealt with?

The usual policy for cancelled sessions of non-medical help will continue to apply. Please refer to the information within the guidance chapters: <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1714/1920-guidance-dsa-new-students-from-ay-201617-v50.pdf> - Section 4.14

Can non-medical help sessions be delivered remotely?

Yes, where it is appropriate to do so sessions can continue to be provided remotely. It is for a provider and their customer to determine whether it is appropriate to provide the support remotely. The provider must be confident that the support can effectively be delivered by remote means and the student must confirm that they are content for the support to be delivered remotely. We would not generally expect NMH sessions to be taking place if teaching on the student's course is suspended. Any sessions which are carried out remotely should be charged at the providers remote hourly rate.

Can non-medical help be carried out by email?

We do not think that it is possible to provide effective support via email. It is acceptable to provide non-medical help sessions over the phone or via a method of video call.

How does a provider get confirmation of support delivered remotely?

Where it is not possible to obtain a wet signature from a customer SFE will be able to accept email confirmation from a student's registered email address. The provider should submit the standard SFE timesheet (signed by the support worker) and an email from the student's registered email address confirming that the session took place with the invoice. This will enable the invoice to be processed first time without the need for SFE to request additional information. A student's "registered email address" is the one which they use to log on to their online student finance account.

Will SFE authorise additional sessions of 1-2-1 specialist mentor support for students whose mental health is impacted by the current situation?

No. The role of a specialist mentor is to help students address the barriers to learning created by their condition. It is not appropriate for specialist mentors to be providing mental health support to students as this is not something which falls under the remit of the disabled student allowance.

Providers

If a provider cannot deliver a service to a student (i.e. equipment delivery, session of non-medical help) do they need to notify SFE?

No. Due to the current situation SFE understands that a provider may not be able to provide support to a student during this time. We would expect that suppliers ensure that they continue to communicate effectively with their customers during this period. If the student is not due to start their course until later in the year then it may be appropriate to postpone equipment delivery, orientation, etc., until nearer the time.

Can providers submit invoices to SFE by email?

There is currently no facility for SFE to receive invoices via email. Due to the volume of invoices received it would not be possible to accept them to one of our general inboxes as there is a significant risk that an inbox would not be able to handle the demand. SFE do have an electronic invoice system in place for secure transfer of invoices via an API, however, this requires the sender to build their own secure front end to link to this system. Additional information on this system can be requested from, dsa_electronic_queries@slc.co.uk. SFE are currently reviewing all our processes to determine what adjustments can be made in these exceptional times to help support our stakeholders and if this approach were to change we will communicate this to providers.

Can SFE send invoice remittances via email instead of on paper?

It is not possible for SFE to issue remittances electronically at the current time.