



Student Loans Company

DSSG 15.01.2020 11:30 – 15:30

OfS and SLC Offices, 2nd Floor, Finlaison House, 15-17 Furnival Street, London EC4A 1AB

Note to cascade

DSA Operational Performance Update

Robotics invoicing was progressing well, with a second phase looking at non-medical evidence invoices starting in September 2020. The SPEC group was reviewing the current guidance around the suitability of students' own Mac computers. Work on the GDPR retention policy was ongoing. Digital evidence upload should be launched in the next few months, meaning that scanned or photocopied evidence could be uploaded directly into a student's account. The invitation to assistive technology and training tender had been published with a closing date of 10 February 2020, and the needs assessment tender was due in autumn 2020.

Department for Education Update

DfE had released a SSIN at the end of November 2019 which detailed the support available to disabled students following the closure of DSA QAG in December 2020. DfE was due to meet with both the Thomas Pocklington Trust and National Deaf Children's Society.

DSA QAG Closure

DfE's aim was not to replicate the previous DSA QAG system. Future non-medical helper audits would ensure that students were receiving adequate support and that public money was being correctly spent. Adherence to the Quality Assurance Framework would eliminate any failings. Students were not sufficiently aware of what they could expect in terms of NMH support. There were reports in the sector of some instances where it was becoming difficult to meet disabled students' support needs.

The Association of Non-Medical Helpers had developed a postcode-based search function as a potential alternative to the previous DSA QAG search, and this had been well received in the sector. However, this was not endorsed by DfE, which had published its own list of DSA-funded support which should be considered definitive. DfE could not endorse or accept the responsibility of maintaining third-party products. Students were being directed to the DfE-hosted static list online as soon as they qualified for DSAs.

SFE was monitoring DSA1 and DSA2 volumes to ensure there was no drop in completed applications if students were having difficulty in accessing local assessments.



Student Loans Company

DSSG Mission and Vision

Members hoped to play a more active role in the relationship with DfE, who tried to be as transparent as possible. Other stakeholder groups had recently changed their focus, and alternative paths for the DSSG could also be considered.

Mileage Allowance and Toll Charges

DfE agreed to look into HMRC recommendations for mileage allowances which had not been reviewed to allow for increased costs. Toll charges were also excluded from current guidelines, and an update on both would follow at the next meeting.

NMH Pay Survey

Responses to ADSHE's survey, co-created by PATOSS and carried out in the sector, had shown significant differences in what HEPs were being charged for NMH support and the amounts paid to individual providers. Guidance notes needed to be updated to address this, and there would be a further discussion at the next meeting.

Tenders

It had been decided that the tender for assistive technology and training would be joint, as this would produce the best outcome for students. Support on both elements would come from a single source, and students would have a single point of contact as well as continuity of support. Students who were already receiving support from providers whose bids had been unsuccessful could contact SLC about ongoing support, and they would still be able to access any allocated funds which they had not already used.

Cancelled NMH sessions

A discussion on NMH sessions which were cancelled for disability-related reasons was planned for the next meeting of the DSSG on 31 March 2020.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, 31 March 2020 11:30 - 15:30, Darlington Boardroom of the SLC office at The Memphis Building, Lingfield Point, McMullen Road, Darlington, County Durham DL1 1RW