

TITLE: Learning Support SOP**Summary of Contents:**

- Learning Support Services and Additional Support Funds for Further Education (FE) students, and
- Learning Support Services for Higher Education (HE) students and Training for Success (TFS) trainees.

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Responsible Owner:

Head of Learner Welfare

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084-01-2014 Learning Support Services for TFS SOP
111-04-2014 Additional Support Funds SOP
010-2014 Disability (Student) Policy

**Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations
Screening Information (Section 75):**

Date Screened: October 2016

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Article 13(2) of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requires that “the Governing Body of an Institution of Further Education shall have regard to the requirements of persons over compulsory school age, who have learning difficulties”. FE Colleges are required under The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 to make reasonable adjustments for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SLDD), so that they can access provision.
- 1.2 This means that wherever possible disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit from whatever education or other related provision is available.
- 1.3 In addition, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 imposes statutory duties on Public Bodies to promote the equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of person, including between persons with a disability and persons without.
- 1.4 To comply with these requirements SERC is obliged to make “reasonable adjustments” to meet the needs of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and long-term medical conditions.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 SERC acknowledges that people with disabilities have the right to equal access to its courses and facilities and to be provided with reasonable resources and adjustments to cater for their needs. The College is committed to supporting enrolled students who have a recognised disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition and ensuring that appropriate support is in place as soon as is practicable by reviewing information provided by those applying to the College.
- 2.2 SERC defines a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition as stated in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as, “a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial (more than minor or trivial) and long term (12 months or more) adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.
- 2.3 This document outlines the procedure for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are provided for students who meet this definition. In doing so it is essential to note that the College can only support students where:
 - The student, their parent or carer has disclosed an additional need.
 - Appropriate evidence (usually medical) has been provided to support the student’s disclosure condition.
- 2.4 It should be noted that failure to disclose an additional need in a timely manner means that the College may not be able to support that student appropriately.

3.0 Learning Support

3.1 The College maintains a dedicated unit, Learning Support, whose role is to:

- Review applicants and students who potentially have an additional support need, during Open Days and other promotional events; through dialogue with the Education Authority (EA) Transition Department, tutor feedback, case conferences etc.
- Meet with the student, their parent/ carers as appropriate and assess their needs, explore potential reasonable adjustments/support options both internally and with external agencies as necessary.
- Agree potential support solutions.
- Advise teaching staff of an individual student's needs and possible support strategies for use in the classroom.
- Implement and review the effectiveness of support arrangements.
- Liaise with the examination unit to ensure that appropriate access arrangements are in place for those students doing examinations and other assessments.
- Provide more general information to assist staff to support learners.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 The following process will be followed in arranging support for students with disabilities, learning needs and long-term medical conditions.

The key steps are:

- Student Disclosure
- Assessment
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Support Needs Recommendations
- Examination Access Arrangements
- Review

5.0 Learning Support Procedure

5.1 Student Disclosure

There is no duty on a student to disclose a disability, and some students may prefer not to disclose a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition for their own reasons.

Failure to disclose a condition that is subsequently identified as impacting on the safety or wellbeing of the student, or others (including other students and staff) could result in a student's enrolment being cancelled. This action may only be taken after a full review of the options available, discussion with relevant parties and consideration of the SERC Safeguarding, Care and Welfare procedures.

It is in a student's best interest to disclose a disability or other learning support need so that the College can make adequate reasonable adjustments as soon as possible. The College therefore strongly encourages students and those applying for courses at the College to disclose any disability as early as possible in the application process.

Early disclosure and engagement with the Learning Support (LS) staff will help to ensure that all appropriate arrangements and reasonable adjustments are in place as the student commences their course.

It should be noted that the College can only confirm the implementation of a “reasonable adjustment” upon the receipt of appropriate evidence of the applicant’s or student’s condition. This evidence will normally be provided by a medical practitioner or other professional e.g. Educational Psychologist.

The College may request information about a student’s disability or other learning need during the application process so that it can adequately identify appropriate reasonable adjustments in a timely fashion. Should the student not proceed to enrol at the College this information will be deleted.

Students are encouraged to declare any additional support need during the enrolment process, and the Learning Support Staff will monitor applicants with a view to identifying those who have declared a Learning Support need.

The Learning Support staff also work with the EA Transition staff to identify students progressing to SERC who may require additional support arrangements, and will request a copy of any Transition Plan that has been prepared if appropriate.

Throughout the academic year any student may approach the Learning Support unit and disclose any support need or concern. Teaching staff may also suggest that, in the light of student progress or otherwise, that they should consider self-referral to Learning Support. This can be done either in person or through the students E-ILP.

The names and contact details for the Learning Support Unit are displayed prominently at each Campus.

5.2 Student Assessment

The Learning Support team will endeavour to provide a student assessment as soon as possible after they disclose their disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition. Such an assessment will involve a careful and sensitive screening of the needs of the individual, discussion on adjustments that have previously been helpful (e.g. at school), diagnostic tests as appropriate, and if necessary, referral for further assessment to other specialists. Students, parents/carers may request that other relevant parties attend this assessment meeting e.g. social worker, interpreter, disability advocate.

A Statement of Special Educational Needs as provided by EA to school children ceases validity when a young person leaves school. Learning Support staff may on occasion use a former statement as guide in identifying appropriate reasonable adjustments.

The scope of this assessment is to identify educational need; it does not include assessments that would constitute a diagnosis of any disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition.

In doing this assessment the following issues will be addressed with appropriate information being recorded, both for College purposes and to comply with Department of the Economy requirements:

- The extent/history of the disability presented.
- The impact the disability will have on the student's College experience/learning.
- The reasonable expectations of achieving the outcomes of course participation.
- The identification of progression routes for the student.
- The type and likely duration of any additional support to be implemented.
- Advice and guidance for the teaching team.
- Additional information required by DfE for monitoring purposes.

All students will be advised by the Learning Support Staff as to the type of evidence that is required to ensure that appropriate adjustments can be put in place.

The responsibility for providing appropriate evidence lies with the student and their parents or carers.

5.3 Reasonable Adjustments

While it is not possible to identify all possible reasonable adjustments Learning Support staff will consider as appropriate, solutions that may include one or more of the following:

- Detailed advice to the student's teaching team that will identify how best that student can be supported during class activities.
- The provision of resources to assist the student e.g. orthopaedic chair, access to study aids e.g. coloured overlays.
- The provision of software or other computer/technical equipment to assist with notetaking and assignment writing.
- The provision of 1:1 support with a Learning Support Assistant to assist with managing their own learning.
- The provision of a Learning Support Assistant while they attend classes
- Being supported on a programme or in a class that has full time support assigned to it.
- Demonstration of relevant assistive technology and training on how to use it
- Being accommodated to address learning outcomes and qualifications over a longer time period.
- Sign Language interpreter.
- Examination Access Arrangements.

In identifying appropriate reasonable adjustments, the College is committed to making reasonable adjustments for learners, while at the same time accepting that some limitations may apply. This means that as far as is reasonably possible, a student with additional needs has the same access to the curriculum and College services as other students. The following factors will be taken into account when considering adjustments:

- The need to maintain academic standards.
- Health and Safety.
- The relevant interests of other stakeholders including other students.
- Practicality.
- The effect of the impairment on the individual student.
- Cost of the reasonable adjustment.

Should the member of Learning Support staff identify that in their opinion it is not possible to facilitate an appropriate “reasonable adjustment” then the case will be referred to the Head of Learner Welfare for review.

Risk Assessments for students with complex needs

Where it is identified that a student has a complex medical condition or other social or behavioural issue which could present significant risk to the student, other students, staff or have significant impact on the delivery of the programme, a formalised risk assessment of their complex needs will be carried out. This will be conducted by a member of Learning Support in conjunction with the teaching team using information from all relevant sources eg the individual, their parents/guardians as appropriate, medical professionals.

The risk assessment will identify any risks and impacts associated with the particular need while attending College and the actions or adjustments that would be required to accommodate the student’s attendance/enrolment to ensure they receive the appropriate care and support. This risk assessment allows for an overall assessment of the risk to be made so that Senior College Management can determine whether or not they can accept the level of risk attached to the student’s attendance and put in place the necessary adjustments.

5.4 Support Needs Recommendation

Upon completion of the student assessment the Learning Support staff will complete a Support Needs Recommendation. This document will provide information about the students need and the proposed reasonable adjustments. The student will agree the content of this document prior to it being forwarded to his or her teaching team. The teaching team will retain the document in a confidential manner. Should there be a significant change in the students circumstances this document will be modified accordingly.

5.5 Examination Access Arrangements

When undertaking external examinations some students may require some form of “Access Arrangement”. For example, this may allow them additional time or supervised rest breaks. However, it is important to note that:

- Students with special educational needs do not automatically qualify for examination access arrangements.
- Students must meet with Learning Support Staff to discuss appropriate examination access arrangements.
- The provision of access arrangements must not give a student an unfair advantage.
- Some students may need to undertake diagnostic assessments to justify an access arrangement.
- Final decisions on special examination arrangements are the responsibility of the awarding body.
- Access arrangements do not carry over into a new academic year, or new course and therefore must be reviewed at the commencement of each year or course.

Further details are provided in Section 9.0 of this document.

5.6 Review

Any student who is being supported through the Learning Support unit can arrange to meet the Learning Support staff at any time to identify and discuss any concerns that they may have in relation to their support and its effectiveness. The Learning Support staff will modify and adapt a Support Needs Recommendations to enhance effectiveness.

Students should note that failure to engage with any learning support service that has been provided (without due reason) may result in that support service being removed.

A formal review of the support arrangements that are in place will be completed and recorded at least once during the second semester of the academic year (or at another appropriate time).

6.0 Accountability Reporting for FE

6.1 SERC is expected to submit an annual evidence-based report to the Department for the Economy (DfE) for the preceding academic year that details the value and effectiveness of the student support that has been provided. The format of the report is set out by DfE in the Interim Policy for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (SLDD) in Further Education (FE) NI. Appendix 3 details the requirements of this report.

7.0 Learning Support Arrangements for Training Programmes

7.1 Those enrolling on Training Organisation programmes, including Skills for Life and Work, Apprenticeship and Higher-Level Apprenticeship programmes may also be able to avail of additional support as they complete their programme within the College.

7.2 The process will mirror that outlined above, with the following points being important:

- The applicant will need to declare any disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition when registering for one of these programmes at the Careers Office. This will ensure that they are coded correctly to allow the College to provide them with the appropriate additional support.
- Given the practical content of these programmes the nature of any “reasonable adjustment” may vary to those for a student on an FE programme. For example, one to one support in a training environment e.g. workshop, kitchen or salon is not normally provided. Support arrangements for theory classes and examinations etc are however likely to be similar to those for FE students.
- Under the terms of the Training contract the College may use the services of approved external agencies. Appropriate consent and data sharing arrangements will be established in such situations to comply with GDPR guidance.

8.0 Learning Support Provision for Higher Education (HE)

8.1 For HE students any extra costs of studying, arising from a disability, such as travel costs, additional non-medical support and equipment are funded by Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) provided by the Education Authority www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

DSA is not based on financial circumstances and there is no age limit. Part-time HE students are also eligible for DSA.

To have support funded through DSA a HE student must first apply to the Education Authority (EA).

- 8.2 The Learning Support Unit will assist HE applicants and students to apply to the EA for the DSA. HE students are therefore strongly advised to make contact with staff from the Learning Support unit as soon as possible so that this process is instigated in good time to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the commencement of the student's course.
- 8.3 Further details relating to the provision of support arrangements for HE students is provided in Appendix 1 of this document.
- 8.4 The College will provide an annual return to the Department for the Economy (DfE) detailing the levels of activity within the College under the Disabled Students' Allowance provision in relation to the previous academic year.

9.0 Examination Access Arrangements

9.1 Examination Access Arrangements may allow a student with a disability, learning difficulty or long-term health issue to avail of special arrangements when undertaking an examination. Such arrangements must be agreed by the relevant awarding body, in line with their stated requirements prior to the examination taking place. Such access arrangements could involve a student being provided with:

- Extra time.
- A room with a limited number of students.
- A reader or a scribe.
- A computer or specialist software.

9.2 All such arrangements invariably require that additional resources are available and adequate time is required to put such arrangements / resources in place. To ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in as timely a fashion as possible all requests must be raised with Learning Support (with the appropriate evidence) at least 5 working weeks prior to an examination.

A range of staff have a role to play in ensuring the effective delivery of examination access arrangements.

9.3 Learning Support Staff are required to:

- Liaise with student and their parents.
- Assess student needs.
- Collect evidence as required.
- Prepare recommendations i.e. Support Need Recommendations.
- Ensure that information about student support requirements is recorded on the Learning Support Information System (LSIS).
- Liaise with the Examinations Unit to ensure that the relevant information to facilitate the approval of the examination access recommendations is available on LSIS.

9.4 Examinations Staff are required to:

- Ensure that needs recommendations and the associated evidence is presented to the Awarding Body for approval as necessary.
- In cooperation with others put the necessary arrangements in place for the student.
- Confirm with Learning Support Staff that the Access arrangements have been put in place or otherwise.
- Provide learning support with information about the results of those who have had additional access arrangements for monitoring purposes.

9.5 Lecturing Staff are responsible for:

- Providing lists of candidates to the examinations unit.
- Identifying any student that may be eligible for examination access arrangements to Learning Support staff in a timely fashion, including during case conferences.
- Liaising with Learning Support to encourage that student to attend Learning Support for an assessment, in a timely fashion.
- Assisting with the collection of appropriate evidence of additional support needs, if necessary.
- Implementing the actions listed in the Support Need Recommendation document.
- Complete the “Normal Way of Working” template (Appendix 2) in a timely fashion and ensure that it is returned to Learning Support.

9.6 Students

To ensure that students can avail of appropriate examination support arrangements, they, their parents/carers are requested to:

- Identify themselves to Learning Support as soon as possible so that assessment and evidence gathering can take begin as soon as possible.
- Forward any requested evidence to learning support as requested.
- Accept that their “normal way of working” will be the basis on which examination access arrangements are recommended for approval.
- Acknowledge that all records are held in secure databases in line with GDPR arrangements and policies, and as detailed in the Learning Support Privacy Notice (available to view on the SERC website).

Note

Examination access arrangements will be put in place for formal examinations as approved by an awarding body. To ensure that approvals are in place it is necessary that the evidence and supporting documentation is submitted to Learning Support as soon as possible after the beginning of the academic year.

If the appropriate evidence and supporting documentation is not made available to the Learning Support at least 5 working weeks before the examination, then the College does not guarantee that the appropriate Access Arrangement will be in place for that examination. The College will provide appropriate examination arrangements for formal examinations. Access arrangements for informal / mock / practice examinations will not be provided by the Examination unit or Learning Support. Such arrangements may be provided the course team at their discretion.

Tutors and students should note that they should only engage with Learning Support staff in terms of identifying necessary examination access arrangements and that the Examination staff can only put arrangements in place as detailed on the formal Learning Support Information System (LSIS) and approved by the awarding body.

10.0 Communication

- 10.1 This SOP will be available to all staff via the Learning Engine on the College intranet. Students will be made aware of it through the student induction process and new members of staff will be informed during staff induction. In addition, information on learning support will be communicated via E-ILP and E-PTP, student and staff circulars, the College website and prospectus, and other media including College plasma screen advertising on campus.

11.0 Review

- 11.1 Learning Support procedures will be reviewed annually or sooner (and updated as necessary) to reflect changes in legislation or circumstance.

Appendix 1

Guidance Notes for Higher Education Students with Additional Support Needs

1.0 Introduction

SERC has support arrangements in place for higher education students (part time and full time) who have additional needs.

The College is committed to ensuring that all students enjoy an educational experience that is engaging and fulfilling and, in all circumstances, will adapt the learning experience to meet the needs of individual learners. If a higher education (HE) student has evidence of a disability, a specific learning difficulty, long term medical condition or other additional learning need, Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) funding may be available to assist. SERC is fully committed to complying with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the Special Education Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO) (as amended).

2.0 Statutory Context

2.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The DDA introduced, over a period of time, new laws and measures aimed at ending the discrimination faced by many disabled people. It gives disabled people rights in:

- Employment.
- Access to goods, facilities and services, including transport.
- The management, buying or renting of property; and
- Education.

The DDA only protects people who meet its definition of disability. The DDA defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

- Physical impairment - this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs) caused through illness, by accident or from birth. Examples are blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg, or heart disease.
- Mental impairment - this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as a learning disability.
- Substantial - this means that the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.
- Long-term adverse effect - the effect has to have lasted, or be likely to last, overall, for at least twelve months, and the effect must be a detrimental one.
- People who are diagnosed with cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

A normal day-to-day activity is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis, such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something as individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

To meet the definition, a person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA:

- mobility.
- manual dexterity.
- physical coordination.
- continence.
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects.
- speech, hearing or eyesight.
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or
- perception of risk of physical danger.

People who satisfy the definition of 'disability' are covered by the DDA. This includes people who have had a disability in the past.

Although education is covered by DDA, a separate piece of legislation deals with disability discrimination. Under SENDO, discrimination in education occurs when:

- a disabled pupil or student, or prospective pupil or student, is treated less favourably than someone else and the treatment is for a reason relating to the pupil's or student's disability; and this treatment cannot be justified.
- there is a failure to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled pupil or student; and/or
- victimisation or harassment occurs.

2.2 Special Education Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO)

SENDO extends protection from disability discrimination to people being educated in Northern Ireland. It protects disabled people from discrimination by schools, institutions of further and higher education (including teacher training and agricultural colleges) and general qualifications bodies. It also strengthens the rights of children with special educational needs to be educated in mainstream education.

SENDO places duties on bodies responsible for the provision of education and associated services, admissions and expulsions, and the conferring of qualifications.

The duties can be summarised as follows:

- Not to directly discriminate against a person because of their disability.
- Not to treat disabled people less favourably (for a reason relating to their disability) than it treats, or would treat, a person to whom that reason does not or would not apply (unless justified). This duty applies to institutions of further and higher education in relation to potential, present and former students, and to general qualifications bodies in relation to people who hold or apply for a relevant qualification conferred by the body.
- To make 'reasonable adjustments' to all policies, procedures and practices to ensure that a disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled. This duty applies to institutions of further and higher education in relation to potential, present and former students, and to

general qualifications bodies in relation to people who hold or apply for a relevant qualification conferred by the body.

- This duty is both an anticipatory duty and a reactive duty. This means that educational institutions must make changes, where reasonable, not only in response to the individual needs of students, but also proactively for disabled students generally. For colleges and universities, the reasonable adjustment duty applies also to the provision of auxiliary aids and services and to the physical environment. For general qualifications bodies, it applies to the physical environment of premises owned or leased by them.
- The duty to make reasonable adjustments requires responsible bodies to take positive steps to make education, and other related services, accessible to disabled people or students. Reasonable adjustments aim to remove or reduce any substantial disadvantages faced by disabled people or students. This may be achieved by:
 - changes in policies, procedures and actions.
 - the provision of teaching and/or other materials in accessible formats.
 - the use of computer technology when necessary; and/or
 - making physical adjustments to premises.

Responsible bodies should not wait until a disabled person applies to a course, or tries to use a service, before thinking about the reasonable adjustments they could make. However, when a responsible body becomes aware of an individual person's disability, it has a duty to meet that person's individual requirements by making reasonable adjustments.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is a continuing duty. Responsible bodies should keep the adjustments constantly under review in light of their experience with disabled people applying to courses and using services.

3.0 Learning Support Team

The Learning Support Team at SERC is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate and reasonable steps have been taken to support students with additional needs. Learning Support staff are available at each of the large campuses and have many years' experience of assessing student need, identifying appropriate adjustments and implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of these. All students who think that they may require additional support are advised to contact Learning Support where they will receive advice and guidance.

4.0 Information and Support for HE Students

During the recruitment and enrolment process steps are taken to ensure that progressing, prospective and new SERC students are aware of the Learning Support Services available to them. All students are emailed about the availability of Learning Support at the commencement of the first term and further information is provided during the induction events. Students and prospective students can make contact with Learning Support at any time but are advised to do so before the term starts or as early in the academic year as possible. At the initial meeting, support available to them will be discussed. Depending on their individual needs, students may be advised to complete the relevant forms to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) support.

The initial meeting with Learning Support is aimed at identifying the most appropriate support arrangements for the student. In many cases this may result in the student

making a formal application for DSA. Alternatively, and additionally, the college may put some of the following arrangements in place, if appropriate:

- Examination access arrangements
- Special parking / access arrangements
- Ergonomic furniture and equipment in the classroom.

With the student's signed permission, and in line with relevant Data Protection legislation, a Support Needs Recommendation is forwarded to relevant staff to advise how best to assist and support the student.

5.0 Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) has been established to help meet the extra course costs students face as a result of their disability. The grant is intended to cover costs that the institution is not legally required to meet under SENDO, which stems from the DDA.

DSAs are funds available to disabled students, on an individual basis, enrolled on higher education programmes, to help them access the curriculum.

- DSA helps students pay for the extra costs of studying arising from a disability such as for example, travel costs, additional non-medical support, equipment.
- The allowance provides support where it is shown that the student's needs cannot be met through the institution's legal requirement under SENDO.
- DSA is not based on financial circumstances and there is no age limit.
- Part-time and full-time higher education students can apply for DSA.

Further information about DSA is available from [Student Finance NI](#) and from DSA Officers at the [Education Authority](#).

The publication, [Bridging the gap: a guide to the Disabled Students' Allowances in Higher Education](#), outlines the eligibility conditions for students.

5.1 DSA Eligibility

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

To confirm eligibility a disabled student must be able to provide the Education Authority NI (EA) with at least one of the following:

- For disabilities and medical conditions - a detailed report or letter from their GP or consultant which gives information about the disability and the effect of the disability on academic performance.
- For specific learning difficulties – a report (post age 16) from a psychologist or specialist teacher.
- For mental health conditions – a detailed report or letter from a GP or other specialist which gives information about the condition and the effect of the condition on academic performance.

DSA does not cover the cost of tests to establish eligibility.

DSA does not provide support to students who have a temporary illness or injury.

5.2 DSA Application Process

- Students complete the DSA form (slimline if they are applying for Student Finance, full DSA1 application form if they are applying for DSA only) and return it to their local Student Finance NI office with evidence of their disability.
- The application is assessed, and students are advised by the EA/Student Finance NI if they are eligible for DSA.
- Once eligibility is confirmed by the EA students are advised to arrange a DSA needs assessment, either in the college or at an independent assessment centre.
- The DSA needs assessment will be carried out by an experienced, specialist assessor. SERC DSA assessors are qualified to SCF Level 6 – Advanced Diploma in Promoting Inclusiveness for Learners with Additional Support Needs, or SCF Level 9 – Full PDA in Inclusiveness: Facilitating Strategies to Support Learners with Additional Needs.
- It is recommended that the assessment is carried out as soon as possible, ideally well before the start of term, as the process can take some time, however students can apply for DSA at any point during their course.

5.3 Completion of a DSA Needs Assessment

Once the necessary evidence is received, and DSA is approved by the EA, the student should arrange to attend a DSA needs assessment to identify the necessary and appropriate course related support. Information about arranging the assessment is outlined in the DSA1 letter sent to the student by the EA (with a copy forwarded to Learning Support). If a student chooses not to attend an assessment they will not be able to receive the additional support they may require, because of their disability, over and above the support provided to their non-disabled peers and the reasonable adjustments made by the college. The cost of one needs assessment is met from the DSA general allowance.

- A DSA needs assessment normally takes about 1.5 to 2 hours to complete. Students are encouraged to provide as much relevant information as possible so that the assessor can make a well-informed decision about what support is appropriate.
- The assessor will consider the individual student's disability and learning needs, the course requirements and DSA guidelines. Further information relating to these is provided in the "Notes" at the end of this document.
- All recommendations are discussed with the student to ensure that their views are considered and valued and that they understand the support that is being recommended and why.
- Throughout the assessment the assessor takes notes to assist the completion of a draft needs assessment report.
- The assessor may demonstrate equipment and software and might also suggest that the student trial equipment or software being recommended.
- The student will be required to sign indicating their willingness for personal, sensitive information to be shared under the provisions of relevant Data Protection legislation.
- The student will be sent a draft copy of their report and will be asked to confirm that it is an accurate reflection of the assessment and that they are happy with the recommendations. Once the student has indicated that they are satisfied, the

assessment will be returned, together with 2 quotes for any recommended support, to the DSA Officer at the relevant EA office.

- When the student receives DSA2 (their awards letter, which is copied to the college) a copy of the needs assessment will be forwarded to the relevant teaching team so that identified adjustments and recommendations can be put in place.

5.4 DSA for returning/continuing students

Continuing students on full time courses do not need to resubmit evidence of disability/reapply for DSA unless there has been a change in their condition, provided they indicate on their Student Finance NI application that they wish to continue receiving DSA.

Part time students need to apply for DSA each year of their course.

6.0 HE Progress Review and Monitoring

SERC uses a range of mechanisms to review the progress of all students, including case conferences and tutorial reviews. In addition, all students who are availing of learning support are asked to meet with Learning Support staff to review the effectiveness of the support arrangements that are in place. For HE students, at least one formal review meeting should be held each academic year. Actions are taken to refine and enhance support arrangements as required.

Appendix 2

NORMAL WAY OF WORKING

TO: Exams and Learning Support

FROM: *lecturer/co-ordinator*

RE: Student Name: *insert student name*
Student Number: *insert student number*

DATE:

I can confirm that *insert student name* has persistent difficulties and requires additional support in class. In addition *insert student name*:

Please delete/retain bullet points below, as appropriate

- normally requires more time than their peers to comprehend and complete work, both in and outside class, to a standard that reflects their ability.
- negotiates extensions to complete coursework, on an assignment-by-assignment basis, with the teaching team.
- frequently needs me to read complex or unfamiliar words, phrases and concepts to ensure understanding.
- produces work to a standard that best reflects their ability when using a PC or laptop as opposed to producing handwriting work.
- *Please include any other reasonable recommended adjustment for examination access, e.g. scribe, prompter, enabling technology, enlarged papers, separate room etc*

I can further confirm that the above is this student's normal way of working and that they would be substantially disadvantaged if they were unable to avail of the above recommended adjustments to examinations.

Appendix 3

Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

A report will be provided by each College on an annual basis which will be structured as outlined in the table below.

<p>Outcome</p> <p>That all students with learning difficulty or disability are provided with appropriate additional support, while studying to help them to achieve to their full potential by progressing to suitable education/training or employment.</p>		
	<p>Relevant Data</p>	<p>Summary of activity during the reporting period</p>
<p>Indicator 1 The effective uptake of the services provided</p>	<p>Number of Students with Learning Difficulties / Disabilities enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrete Provision • Mainstream Provision 	<p>Promotion and engagement activities including those that relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of the support arrangements that are available • Transition planning with schools, EA other providers • Assessment of needs and reasonable adjustments • Resource issues • Parental / carer engagement
<p>Indicator 2 Effectiveness of the additional support arrangements that have been put in place</p>	<p>Numbers availing of support</p> <p>Numbers availing of examination access arrangements</p> <p>Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of full qualification • of partial qualification 	<p>Summary of the type and nature of support arrangements that have been arranged to support students</p> <p>Other achievements</p>

	<p>Progression statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers progressing to additional training / education • Numbers progressing to employment / voluntary work <p>Student Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from student surveys • Information from student focus groups • Other feedback 	
<p><u>Indicator 3</u> Ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities to enhance staff capability in supporting those students with learning difficulties and disabilities.</p>	<p>Numbers participating in relevant CPD activities Annual expenditure on CPD activities</p>	<p>Details of professional development activities to enhance skills in supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities.</p>