Department for Education

Assistive software funded through Disabled Students' Allowance

Government consultation

Launch date 26 March 2026

Respond by 18 June 2026

Contents

Introduction

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a grant for disabled students which plays a key role in supporting access to higher education. In the 2023/24 academic year, DSA supported over 88,000 students to receive support such as specialist equipment and software, additional disability-related travel and accommodation costs, and non-medical help (the human support that some students need to help them access their studies, such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters or specialist study skills support).

Since its introduction in 1974, DSA has evolved many times to remain relevant to the needs of the disabled students it supports. Over recent years there have been huge advances in technology, with many functions that were once the preserve of specialist software products now being available as standard across computer operating systems and widely used mainstream software programmes. Alongside this, higher education providers (HEPs) have increasingly been providing learning technologies across their student cohort, both to reflect the increasingly widespread use of technology in schools, higher education study and in the workplace, and in line with a move towards creating more inclusive learning environments. We strongly support these approaches, which we expect also to enable a smooth transition for disabled students from schools and colleges into HE and then the workplace, or from the workplace into HE and back to the workplace.

With these changes in mind, this consultation seeks views on our proposals to modernise the way in which assistive software is funded through DSA to ensure that we are funding what the student of today needs, not the technology of the past. As part of this, we are also seeking input to support development of our policy on DSA funding for tools which incorporate artificial intelligence (AI). Overall, the proposals in this consultation are intended to support a move to a policy position where the assumption is that assistive software is readily available to the student and will therefore only be funded where there is an additional disability-related need for it that cannot be met by any other software available to the student free of charge – to allow us to better support students in other ways, where there are not free alternatives to meet their needs.

Who this is for

- higher education providers (HEPs)
- current and prospective disabled students in higher education (HE), and HE graduates
- stakeholders within the HE sector working with disabled students
- groups working with disabled people wishing to enter HE
- disability charities and wider advocacy organisations working with disabled people

- those working in the DSA sector, including suppliers of assistive software.

We are seeking to consult as widely as possible and would welcome input from independent experts in disability and assistive software, as well as from all those who may be affected by the proposals in this consultation.

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 26 March 2026.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team on dsa-software.consultation@education.gov.uk.

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk, telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the DfE Contact us page.

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from GOV.UK DfE consultations.

The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be published on GOV.UK in the autumn of 2026.

About this consultation

This consultation document sets out proposals for changes to the way in which we fund assistive software through DSA. It also seeks views on the use of AI in supporting disabled students. We would like to hear your views on our proposals.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit DfE consultations on GOV.UK to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request an alternative format of the form.

By email

- dsa-software.consultation@education.gov.uk

By post

Katherine Bayliss
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

Deadline

The consultation closes on 18 June 2026.

Introductory questions

1. What is your name? [Optional - leave blank if you wish to submit an anonymous response]

2. What is your email address? [Optional - leave blank if you wish to submit an anonymous response]

3. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

    - Individual
    - Organisation
    - Other (please specify)

4. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of your organisation? [Optional - leave blank if you wish to submit an anonymous response]

5. What category do you fall into? [Select all categories that apply]

    - Current student in higher education
    - Prospective student in higher education
    - Graduate or leaver of higher education
    - Higher education provider
    - DSA supplier
    - Charity
    - Other (please specify)

6. Would you be happy for us to contact you about your response?

    - Yes
    - No

Background

DSA is a grant which helps students with the additional costs that they may face in higher education because of their disability. DSA is not means-tested and does not have to be repaid. It is available to full-time and part-time students at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

DSA can be used to fund a range of support, including specialist equipment and software, additional disability-related travel and accommodation costs, and non-medical help (the human support provided to students to enable them to access their studies). DSA is available in addition to the reasonable adjustments made by HEPs under their Equality Act 2010 responsibilities for the provision of more specialist support. It is not intended to cover study costs that any student might have, or disability-related expenditure that the student would incur even if they were not attending a higher education course. DSA is not means-tested.

In the 2023/24 academic year, DSA supported over 88,000 students at a cost of £203m.

To be eligible for DSA, students must:

1. meet the personal eligibility criteria for student finance within the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 and be studying a course designated for student support; and
2. have a disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010

DSA is administered by the Student Loans Company (SLC), which determines students' eligibility and approves the support that can be funded through DSA. When a student has been assessed as eligible for DSA by SLC, they are asked to attend a needs assessment. This is an interview between the student and the needs assessor to discuss what support the student may need in higher education. Following the interview, the needs assessor writes up a report for SLC with recommendations on what support should be funded. SLC then reviews the report, makes a final decision on what support will be funded for the student through DSA, and writes to the student confirming their agreed support.

Assistive software has been funded through DSA for many years to assist disabled students in accessing their studies. However, over recent years there have been huge advances in technology, alongside which HEPs have increasingly been providing learning technologies across their student cohort, in line with a move towards creating more inclusive learning environments (an approach which we strongly support). In response to these developments, we are therefore undertaking a review of the assistive software funded through DSA to determine how this can best meet the needs of students today and to ensure that we are managing public money effectively.

DSA-funded computer equipment and associated accessories (such as keyboards, mice, carry cases, headphones, and so on) are not part of this consultation, which is focused on assistive software. However, the proposals in this consultation will have an impact on the award of DSA-funded computer equipment and associated accessories because this is awarded primarily to run the assistive software that students are awarded, so changes to the way in which software is awarded may affect whether or not students are awarded DSA-funded equipment and associated accessories.

The proposals in this consultation do not affect the overall eligibility and entitlement rules for students under DSA. We expect that they will apply to new students only; no changes will be made to support packages that have already been agreed for existing students.

Principles

DSA funding is based on the following principles: we only fund assistive software through DSA where:

1. its purpose is to support the student's studies in higher education (so software to support daily living, wellbeing, and so on would be out of scope), and
2. it is required for disability-related purposes and would not be required by any student (so, for example, we would fund screen-reading software for a visually impaired student, but not music software or graphic design software that any student studying these subjects would need to use on their course)

Historically, the application of these principles was, broadly, an assumption that a basic computer and the free or in-built tools available would not provide the accessibility features or functionality required by a disabled student. This meant that assistive software has in effect been funded as standard through DSA to provide any features that a disabled student might need in higher education. A number of developments have now prompted us to revisit this position. These include the following.

Many of the features provided in assistive software products have now been incorporated as standard into computer operating systems, internet browsers and so on. This means that some accessibility features are now widely available to all students using a computer in a way that they were not in the past.

There has been an increasing blurring of boundaries when it comes to DSA funding between software that any student might require (which is generally out of scope of DSA) and software that is meeting a specific disability-related need (which is generally within scope of DSA). This has resulted in some types of software being awarded through DSA which we do not believe are in line with the core principles of DSA funding.

Some of the assistive software products funded by DSA now incorporate substantial additional features (for example, wellbeing support, study or revision guides, access to coaches, and so on). These additional features are generally out of scope of DSA, which means that we may be paying a higher price for products to cover additional features which are not required to support the student's disability-related needs.

Free to access assistive software is now commonly available. While in some cases this may have fewer features than paid-for assistive software, or restrictions affecting its use, we are exploring how far the free to access assistive software products can meet the needs of DSA recipients given that it is not an effective use of public money to fund a software product when the student can access the required functionality for free.

Anecdotal feedback has indicated that in some cases, students are now being recommended so many different assistive software products through DSA that some find it overwhelming and end up not using assistive software at all. We understand that "overwhelm" can be a particular issue for students with certain disabilities and think our proposals in this consultation, if implemented, should result in students receiving a smaller, more tailored package of support. It is also not an effective use of public money for us to be funding software that a student is not using.

Another important technology development to consider is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). A number of software products now have features powered by AI which have the ability to prepare content on the student's behalf, potentially in breach of HEP policies on the use of AI in students' work. While we understand that these can be powerful tools to support disabled students to succeed in their studies, it is not helpful for DSA to fund software products which students may find to be in breach of their HEP's policies. We need to consider how to reflect these new technologies in DSA policy.

The learning technologies that many HEPs now make available to all their students as part of inclusive learning and teaching approaches (for example, lecture recordings and notes) have lessened the need for separate standalone software products to some extent. We have also had feedback that where disabled students are able to use in-built or widely available accessibility tools instead of costly separate software products to meet their needs, this can be helpful in supporting transitions between school and HE, and between HE and the workplace.

Overall, we are intending to move to a policy position where the assumption is that assistive software is readily available to the student and will therefore only be funded where there is an additional disability-related need for it that cannot be met by any other software available to the student.

The increased "mainstreaming" of technology over recent years has been a hugely positive development for disabled students, as has the increased provision of learning

technologies by HEPs and the increasingly widespread use of technology in schools, higher education study, and the workplace. We need to ensure that we modernise the DSA programme to keep pace with changes and ensure that we are funding what the student of today needs, not the technology of the past.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

AI tools have become commonly available to students and have also begun to be incorporated into the assistive software products that are available through DSA. As this is an emerging technology, we need to consider if any changes should be made to the way in which we fund assistive software through DSA as a result. We have therefore set out some broad questions on which we are seeking views.

7. Are the AI features that have been incorporated into DSA-funded assistive software products compliant with HEPs' policies on AI?

8. How should we take into account HEPs' policies on AI in our decisions on what to fund through DSA?

9. Should DSA fund software products containing generative AI tools that can create original content for students' academic work?

10. Are there any ethical concerns regarding the use of AI in assistive software products? Does this pose any risk to students?

11. In what ways can AI be used to improve support for disabled students?

12. In what way do AI tools designed for general use differ from those integrated into assistive software for students with disabilities, and how do any differences affect user experience, accessibility, and so on?

Application of DSA principles

We have undertaken an initial review of all software currently funded by DSA with regard to the principles described above and have set out in the “Proposals” section below for comment how we propose to apply these principles going forwards for each type of software, and what changes to current policy these proposals will result in.

There has been an increasing trend for software products to cover multiple types of support, and for products that do not fit well into the current structure of this part of the DSA grant to become available. Our intention is that once we have agreed an approach to the application of DSA principles following this consultation, we will apply that approach to any new and emerging technology that becomes available, seeking input from stakeholders if and when required.

Spelling and grammar software

We announced in February 2025 that we would remove DSA funding for non-specialist spelling and grammar software other than in exceptional circumstances, on the grounds that there are now free to access versions available with the required functionality, but would retain DSA funding for specialist spelling and grammar software (that which is specifically aimed at a specific subject area with significant technical vocabulary)[1]. As this decision has already been made, we have not included specific questions on spelling and grammar software in this consultation document. However, the proposals on demanding software and software pricing included in this consultation would apply to spelling and grammar software as well.

Assistive technology training and aftercare support

Training on assistive software and aftercare support is currently funded through DSA to help students use any assistive software they have been awarded to its full effect. We are not intending to make any changes to this and so have not included any proposals on this in the consultation. Training will continue to be provided where required for software agreed for a student through DSA, whether free to access or paid for.

Computers and associated equipment

While DSA-funded equipment is not in scope of this consultation, the proposals set out below, if implemented, would result in a reduction in the number of assistive software

[1] ssin-spelling-and-grammar-software.pdf

products awarded and therefore a corresponding reduction in the number of computers and associated equipment (keyboards, mice, carry cases, headphones, and so on) awarded. This is because computers are awarded where required to run the assistive software that a student has been awarded.

Proposals

These proposals have been categorised by the type of support the software is providing to a student. Some software products may therefore be relevant to more than one category. A list of software products that may fall under each category is supplied at Appendix 1 (this is for illustrative purposes only and is not exhaustive).

For each software category, we have reviewed the paid-for software products funded through DSA as well as the free-to-access versions available. Microsoft Office has been classified as free to access for the purposes of this review because most students (those with a ".ac.uk" email address) can access it for free and eligible students who are not able to access Microsoft Office for free can have it funded through DSA if required.

There are a small number of very specialist software products (e.g. mouse alternative software) that do not fall into the broad categories below and are awarded relatively rarely for very specific support needs. We do not intend to make any changes to our approach to these and will continue to fund them on a case-by-case basis as required.

It is increasingly the case that HEPs are making certain software available to all their students. We already expect needs assessors only to recommend assistive software products if equivalent software is not available through the student's HEP and intend that this policy will continue.

Demanding software

Currently, for DSA purposes, software is classified as either "demanding" or "non-demanding" (a list of software currently classified as "demanding" is included at Appendix 2). Demanding software requires a computer of a higher than basic specification to run, so students who are recommended demanding software are also eligible to have a computer of the required specification funded through DSA (with a £200 contribution from the student to reflect the fact that computers are now a necessary cost of study for all students), if they do not already own a suitable computer. Non-demanding software (for example, software that is web-based) does not require a computer of a higher than basic specification to run and so students who are recommended non-demanding software only are not eligible to have a computer funded through DSA.

This system has been in place for many years, and as part of this review, we have considered whether any changes should be made. To strike a balance between managing public money effectively and ensuring that "demanding" software can still be awarded to those students who require it to meet their disability-related needs, we propose to implement a rule that demanding software will only be funded where there is no suitable non-demanding software available that meets the student's needs.

13. Do you have any comments on our proposal to fund demanding software only where there is no suitable non-demanding software available that meets the student's needs?

14. Do you have any comments on the definition of "demanding software" for DSA purposes?

Software types

Composition and mind mapping software

Composition software helps users to structure their writing and generally includes planning and structuring features, writing guides, and editing and reviewing support. There is considerable overlap between these features and the features of other tools such as mind mapping tools (for planning and structuring) and spelling and grammar correctors (for editing support). We therefore consider that free-to-access tools would be suitable for the needs of the vast majority of students who need support with composition.

Mind mapping software helps users to organise information, ideas or concepts visually in a structured format, typically resembling a diagram or tree. It is widely used by students regardless of whether or not they have a disability, but can be particularly helpful for students with conditions such as dyslexia or ADHD to help them break down complex ideas and support comprehension and organisation.

Our review has found that there are a large number of free-to-access mind mapping tools available. While we recognise that the paid-for mind mapping tools have additional and in some cases more advanced features, we consider that the free-to-access mind mapping tools that are now available would be suitable for the needs of the vast majority of students who are using this software to organise their thoughts to complete their academic work. We are also aware that some HEPs offer access to mind mapping software to all their students.

Our proposed approach going forwards is therefore that we will fund composition and mind mapping software only in exceptional circumstances.

15. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to composition and mind mapping software?

We understand that some composition software products also incorporate AI-powered predictive text tools. As set out in the section above on AI, we are developing our policy towards AI-powered tools and will apply this policy to software containing AI-powered predictive text tools once it has been finalised.

Note-taking, recording and captioning software

Captioning software converts spoken language into text in real time. It can make spoken content more accessible for students who are deaf or who benefit from visual reinforcement. Recording software allows for content such as lectures to be played back later. Note-taking software allows users to record, organise and review information from lectures and seminars.

It is generally the responsibility of the HEP to make their teaching accessible, and so our current policy is that DSA will not fund captioning software unless this is required for reasons other than to access HEP teaching sessions or materials. We are not proposing any changes to this specific policy. Where a student does require captioning software for other reasons, our review has found that free to access and/or built-in captioning tools would be suitable for the needs of the vast majority of students who are currently being recommended captioning software through DSA. Our proposed approach going forwards is therefore that we will fund captioning software only in exceptional circumstances.

Note-taking software is widely used by students, and our review of the free note-taking software available has found that free to access and/or built-in note-taking software is likely to be suitable for the needs of the vast majority of students who are currently being recommended note-taking software through DSA. Our proposed approach going forwards is therefore that we will fund note-taking software only in exceptional circumstances.

Recording software is generally awarded as a stand-alone product only alongside a digital recording device to which it is linked. We do not intend to make any changes to this practice.

16. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to note-taking, recording and captioning software?

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software

OCR software converts scanned documents, PDFs or images into editable and searchable text. It is particularly helpful for students with a vision impairment who use screen readers or magnifiers, and for students with dyslexia where digital text can be adapted for easier reading.

HEPs have a responsibility to make their learning materials accessible, so OCR software is only agreed in circumstances where the student requires this for a disability-related reason and their requirements to access these types of documents go beyond what we would consider to be a reasonable adjustment for the HEP.

We have reviewed the free to access and paid-for OCR tools, and have concluded that the free OCR tools may be suitable if the student:

- only needs to extract plain text
- does not need formatting or layout to be preserved
- uses the Mac operating system (which has more advanced built-in OCR features)

However, the free tools may not be sufficient if the student:

- requires the original layout and formatting to be preserved
- uses screen readers that depend on structured documents
- needs to process large numbers of files
- needs very high accuracy
- requires advanced PDF features such as tagging, editing or conversion
- needs integration with assistive technology

We consider it likely that most students who are recommended OCR software through DSA will require these features.

Our proposal is therefore that we will continue with our current approach towards OCR software and make no changes to this.

17. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to OCR software?

Presentation support software

Presentation support software is intended to help the user prepare to give a presentation. In our view, any student might find presentation support software helpful and so we do not consider this to fall within the scope of DSA. Our proposal is therefore that we will fund presentation support software only in exceptional circumstances.

18. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to presentation support software?

Research and referencing software

Research software supports the research process by simplifying the finding, understanding, organisation and use of academic information. Referencing software is designed to support the effective management of citations and bibliographies when writing essays, reports, or academic papers.

In our view, research and referencing software is widely used by students regardless of whether or not they have a disability, and we do not consider that there will generally be a specific disability-related need for this software. In addition to this, our review of the

free-to-access and paid-for research and referencing software tools available has concluded that the available free tools, or a combination of these free tools, should be sufficient to support the needs of the vast majority of students in any case.

Our proposed approach going forwards is therefore that we will fund research and referencing software only in exceptional circumstances.

19. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to research and referencing software?

Revision software

In our view, any student might find revision software helpful and so we do not consider this to fall within the scope of DSA. Our proposal is therefore that we will fund revision software only in exceptional circumstances.

20. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to revision software?

Software to support vision impairment

DSA funds specialist software such as screen readers and magnifiers to support students with a vision impairment. Our proposed approach going forwards is to continue to fund this where required and not to make any changes.

21. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to software to support vision impairment?

Speech-to-text software

Speech-to-text software is a type of assistive technology that converts spoken language into written text. It is designed to help people who have difficulty with writing, typing, or processing written language.

Our review has found that free-to-access speech-to-text software tools are easy to access, require minimal set-up, and support basic transcription tasks, making them suitable for students with general dictation needs. The paid-for software products offer advanced features such as voice training, vocabulary customisation and formatting commands. In our view, the paid-for software products are particularly important for students with physical conditions which make typing difficult or exhausting.

Our proposed approach going forwards is that other than in exceptional circumstances, we will only fund speech-to-text software for students who, as a result of their disability, rely on speech recognition as their primary method of written communication and of controlling a computer.

22. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to speech-to-text software?

Text-to-speech software

Text-to-speech software is a type of assistive technology that converts written text into spoken words. It is designed to help people who have difficulty reading and/or processing written content.

Our review has found that the free-to-access text-to-speech tools are accessible, simple to use, and often integrated into widely used platforms. The paid-for software products usually offer a broader range of features such as the ability to integrate with more platforms, more visual aids, and optical character recognition (OCR, which as set out above reads text from scanned documents and images). We have therefore concluded that the free-to-access products can be effective and sufficient for many students.

Our proposed approach going forwards for text-to-speech software is that we will no longer fund text-to-speech software other than in exceptional circumstances for the following categories of student:

- students with dyslexia
- students with ADHD
- students with autism
- students with mental health conditions
- students who are Mac users (as Macs have advanced in-built text-to-speech software)

We will continue to fund text-to-speech software for students with a vision impairment.

The categories above are those for which this software has commonly been funded; they are not exhaustive of all disabilities. Recommendations for text-to-speech software for other disabilities will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

23. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to text-to-speech software?

Time and task management software

Time and task management software helps people to organise their time effectively through features such as task lists, calendars, and reminders. It is widely used by students regardless of whether or not they have a disability, but can be particularly helpful for students with conditions that affect their organisational skills.

Our review of the free to access and paid-for time and task management software products has concluded that the free to access products provide similar functionality to the paid-for products with regard to organisation. Some of the paid-for products provide additional features such as wellbeing support, study guides, and access to coaches. We

have reviewed these additional features and have determined that they are out of scope of DSA funding.

Our proposal is that we will therefore fund time and task management software only in exceptional circumstances.

24. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to time and task management software?

Training software

Training software contains tutorials on how to use different assistive software products. It is generally awarded to students to help them use the assistive software that they have been awarded through DSA more effectively. Our proposal is that we will continue with our current approach towards training software and make no changes.

25. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to training software?

Typing tutor software

Typing tutor software helps users learn how to touch type, which is a skill that many students may find useful unless they are using dictation or speech-to-text software as an alternative. In certain limited circumstances, students with a disability may need more support in learning to type effectively.

However, our review has found that there are free to access tools available with the required functionality. Our proposal is therefore that we will fund typing tutor software only in exceptional circumstances.

26. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to typing tutor software?

Exceptional circumstances

We anticipate that for a number of the proposals set out above, we will need to make exceptions on a case-by-case basis for a small number of students.

27. What types of exceptional circumstances do you think should be considered when deciding whether to make exceptions to the proposals set out above?

Software pricing

Currently, there is significant difference in pricing between software products that offer similar features, and a needs assessor recommends a specific brand of software for a student. To improve value for money in this spend, we therefore propose to implement a

rule that the needs assessor recommends a type of software (rather than a specific brand), and that where SLC have agreed a recommendation for paid-for assistive software of a particular type, DSA will fund the lowest cost software product available that meets the needs of the student. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we propose to take the approach that the product funded will be the lowest cost of the software products listed on the DSA catalogue at the time the recommendation is agreed (noting that the catalogue is fluid and products can be added and removed at any time; specific recommendations for products not on the catalogue at that time would also be considered, as currently).

28. What are your thoughts on our proposal to fund the lowest cost software product available that meets the needs of the student?

Equality Impact Assessment

All DSA recipients share the protected characteristic of disability. DSA recipients are disproportionately female, with female students making up 68.4% of all undergraduate (UG) students known to be in receipt of DSA compared to 57.3% of all UG students (where sex is recorded as either male or female). At postgraduate (PG) level, female students make up 71.9% of all PG students known to be in receipt of DSA compared to 64.4% of all PG students[2]. More detailed data on the protected characteristics of DSA recipients is provided at Appendix 3.

The overall principles of DSA funding are not changing; there remains a guiding principle that students who need software for disability-related reasons in order to access their studies will continue to have that funded through DSA. While we expect that these proposals would mean that less software will be funded through DSA than currently, we have designed these proposals with the aim of ensuring that they do not have a negative impact on disabled students' access to their studies.

Software proposals

There is a risk that moving to a policy position where the assumption is that assistive software is readily available to the student, and will therefore only be funded where there is an additional disability-related need for it that cannot be met by any other software available to the student, may have a negative impact on some disabled students who might prefer to use paid-for software. However, this impact would be mitigated by the following:

- if the software products freely available to the student do not meet the student's disability-related support needs, and the support required is within the scope of DSA, paid-for software may still be funded for the student

- assistive technology training on all software (free or paid for) agreed in a student's needs assessment report would continue to be provided where required to students through DSA

There may be a positive impact for some students if they receive a smaller, more tailored package of support through DSA, rather than a large number of software products which may be overwhelming.

[2] Analysis based on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on English-domiciled students at UK higher education providers in the 2023/24 academic year.

Demanding software

The proposal to implement a rule that demanding software will only be funded where there is no suitable non-demanding software available that meets the student's needs may result in some students not receiving a subsidised higher specification computer through DSA when they would have done under the current arrangements. However, students will still be recommended a higher specification computer if they are recommended demanding software. If students are not recommended demanding software, they will not need a higher specification computer for a disability-related reason.

Software pricing

The proposal to implement a rule that we will fund the lowest cost product available that meets the needs of a student may have a negative impact on some disabled students who might prefer to use another brand. However, this impact would be mitigated by the fact that they will still receive software of the required functionality to meet their disability-related support needs.

29. What do you think are the equality impacts of our proposals?

Appendix 1 – Software List

This appendix provides a list of software products that may fall under each of the categories included in this consultation. Please note that this is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Composition software

- Apple Intelligence Writing Tools
- Essay Writer
- Google Gemini
- Lightkey
- Microsoft OneNote
- QuillBot
- Scrivener
- StudyPro
- Writing Helper

Mind mapping software

- Ayoa
- ClaroIdeas
- Coggle
- Freemind
- Freeplane
- GitMind
- Ideamapper
- Inspiration
- iThoughts
- Microsoft OneNote
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft Whiteboard
- Microsoft Word
- MindGenius
- MindManager
- MindMeister
- MindMup
- Mindomo
- MindView
- Miro

- SimpleMind
- Wisemapping
- Xmind

Note-taking, recording and captioning software

- AudioNote
- Caption.Ed Notes
- Caption.Ed Pro
- Evernote
- Genio Notes (formerly Glean)
- Genio Notes and Captions (formerly Glean)
- Google Chrome Live Captions
- Ivvi Notes
- Jamworks Captions
- Jamworks Notes
- Messenger Pigeon Notes
- Messenger Pigeon Pro
- Microsoft OneNote
- Notability
- NTEhub
- Otter.ai
- Sensory Scribe
- Sonocent
- Speaksee AutoCaption

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software

- ABBYY FineReader v16
- Foxit PDF Pro
- KNFB Reader
- Omnipage Standard
- OpenBook Scanning and Reading Software
- Readiris Pro
- Windows OCR
- Tesseract

Presentation support software

- Genio Present

- Microsoft Speaker Coach
- Present Pal
- Presenter Coach

Research and referencing software

- Abstractx
- AI Blaze
- Audemic Scholar
- Connected Papers
- Elicit
- Endnote
- Genei Basic
- Google Scholar
- Mendeley
- Microsoft Copilot
- NotebookLM
- Otio
- Pro-Study
- ResearchPal
- Scholarcy
- Tailo
- Thinkmap
- Wisdolia
- Zotero

Revision software

- Algor Education
- AnkiApp
- AnkiMobile Flashcards (iOS)
- Brainscape
- ChatGPT
- Jamworks
- Lernabl Revision Tool (formerly Pro-Revise)
- Luna
- Microsoft Copilot
- Quizlet
- Reclaim.ai
- StudySmarter

Software to support vision impairment

- Apple VoiceOver (macOS / iOS)
- ChromeVox
- Dolphin SuperNova Magnifier
- Dolphin Supernova Magnifier & Screen Reader
- Fusion
- Google ChromeVis
- iZoom Screen Magnifier Software
- JAWS
- J-Dictate
- J-Say
- NVDA
- Orca
- TalkBack (Android)
- Windows Narrator
- Zoomtext Magnifier

Speech-to-text software

- Apple Dictation and Voice Control (macOS / iOS)
- Cephable
- Dragon
- Google Docs Voice Typing (Chrome browser)
- Google Voice Access (Android)
- Microsoft Dictate
- SpeechTexter (Web & Android)
- TalkType Dictation
- Voiceitt
- VoxAid
- Windows Speech Recognition
- WordQ & SpeakQ

Text-to-speech software

- Apple Dictation and Voice Control (macOS / iOS)
- Balabolka
- Cephable
- Dragon
- Google Docs Voice Typing (Chrome browser)

- Google Text-to-Speech
- Google Voice Access (Android)
- Mac built-in features
- Microsoft Dictate
- Microsoft Edge Read Aloud
- SpeechTexter (Web & Android)
- TalkType Dictation
- Voice Dream Reader (iOS)
- Voiceitt
- VoxAid
- Windows Speech Recognition
- WordQ & SpeakQ

Time and task management software

- Asana
- Ayoa DSA
- Booost
- Brain in Hand
- Global Tasks
- Google Assistant
- Google Calendar
- Google Keep
- Google Tasks
- HandiCalendar
- MeisterTask
- Microsoft Planner
- Microsoft To Do
- MindView AT Suite
- MyStudyLife
- Stress Autism Mate (SAM)
- Study Key
- Taskheat (macOS / iOS)
- Todoist

Training software

- Aspire - Online Learning and Support Platform
- Dragon eLearning Solution
- FindMyFlow - Course Long AT eLearning and Study Skills Resource

- iView Learning
- Learning Labs - Course License
- Neurotalent Unlocked - 4 Course bundle
- Online Visual Reading Course (formerly Online SuperReading Eyehopping)
- Studdie

Typing tutor software

- Azabat Typing Tutor
- Englishtype Senior
- KAZ Neurodiverse Typing Tutor
- KeyBlaze
- NCHSoftware
- RataType
- Ten Thumbs Typing Tutor
- Touch-type Read and Spell
- Typesy
- Typing Club
- Typing Instructor
- Typing.com
- TypingMaster

Appendix 2 – Demanding Software

Below is a list of software currently classified as “demanding” for DSA purposes.

Software to support vision impairment

- Dolphin SuperNova Magnifier & Screen Reader
- Fusion
- JAWS
- Zoom Text Magnifier

Speech-to-text software

- Cephable
- Dragon Professional Individual
- TalkType Dictation

Text-to-speech software

- ClaroRead
- Ghotit Real Writer & Reader Software DSA Edition
- Kurzweil 3000
- Read&Write
- Sensory Readable

Appendix 3 – Protected characteristics of DSA recipients

For contextual information, the tables below set out information on the protected characteristics of DSA recipients[3].

Sex

Table 1: undergraduate DSA recipients by sex

Sex	% sex split of all undergraduate students	% sex split of all undergraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
Male	42.7%	31.6%
Female	57.3%	68.4%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Table 2: postgraduate DSA recipients by sex

Sex	% sex split of all postgraduate students	% sex split of all postgraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
Male	35.6%	28.1%
Female	64.4%	71.9%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

[3] Data sourced from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) "Student" and "Alternative Student" records. All tables include both full-time and part-time students, and exclude a small proportion of cases where it is unknown by the compiler of the return if a disabled student is in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance. All percentages are based on known populations.

Ethnicity

Table 3: undergraduate DSA recipients by ethnicity

Ethnicity group	% ethnicity split of all undergraduate students	% ethnicity split of all undergraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
White	65.7%	73.5%
Asian	15.8%	9.2%
Black	10.2%	8.6%
Other (including mixed)	8.3%	8.6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Table 4: postgraduate DSA recipients by ethnicity

Ethnicity group	% ethnicity split of all postgraduate students	% ethnicity split of all postgraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
White	69.9%	73.3%
Asian	13.6%	8.1%
Black	9.4%	9.9%
Other (including mixed)	7.1%	8.6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Age

Table 5: undergraduate DSA recipients by age

Age group	% age split of all undergraduate students	% age split of all undergraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
20 years and under	51.6%	48.8%
21 to 24 years	21.1%	29.0%
25 to 29 years	7.5%	7.6%
30 years and over	19.8%	14.6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

Table 6: postgraduate DSA recipients by age

Age group	% age split of all postgraduate students	% age split of all postgraduate students known to be in receipt of DSA
20 years and under	0.2%	0.1%
21 to 24 years	25.7%	34.4%
25 to 29 years	21.3%	23.9%
30 years and over	52.8%	41.6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

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