Fund for Students with Disabilities

Guidelines for
Higher Education Institutions

2022/23

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PART A – PURPOSE OF THE FSD AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

A1   Introduction

The purpose of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) is to provide funding to higher and further education institutions to assist them in offering supports and services to eligible students with disabilities so that they can participate on an equal basis with their peers. The FSD is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). The FSD operates in addition to the legal framework supporting the rights of students with disabilities to access higher education. The FSD also operates in addition to mainstream resources and services in place in higher education institutions (HEIs).

These guidelines provide the following information:

- purpose of the FSD and legal obligations
- eligibility and expenditure rules
- guidance on services and accommodations
- eligibility criteria for support
- allocation of funding

These guidelines are applicable to HEIs in Ireland (see Appendix 3) and relate to the provision of direct student supports.

There are separate guidelines for Irish students studying in EU Member States and the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland).

With effect from the 2020/21 academic year SOLAS assumed responsibility for the management of the FSD for the further education and training sector including the drafting and issuing of guidelines.

A2   Legal obligations of service providers

HEIs should be aware of the protections afforded to students with disabilities under the Equal Status legislation. For the purposes of the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, HEIs are service providers and are prohibited from discriminating against any person seeking to access a course[1], benefit or facility on the grounds of disability or any of the eight other discriminatory grounds.

Section 4 of the Equal Status Act prescribes that, for the purposes of the Act, discrimination includes a refusal or failure by the provider of a service to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the service. A refusal or failure to provide

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[1] Any course provided by the HEI, whether full- or part-time

the special treatment or facilities shall not be deemed to be reasonable unless such provision would give rise to a cost, other than a nominal cost, to the provider of the service in question. The meaning of nominal cost will depend on the size and resources of the organisation.

Under the principle of vicarious liability, the HEI has legal responsibility for the conduct, during their employment, of individual teachers, lecturers and other staff members. The HEI is also vicariously liable for discrimination by agents acting on their behalf.

The reasonable accommodation duty is only triggered where there is actual or constructive knowledge of the service user's disability. Where a service user chooses not to comply with a request for medical evidence/certification of the disability, this may relieve the service provider from their duty to reasonably accommodate.

A3   Purpose of the FSD

The purpose of the FSD is to provide resources to higher education institutions for the delivery of key services and supports for students with disabilities on full-time and part-time courses. The FSD aims to support the personal, educational and professional development of the participating student and contribute to the achievement of their full potential.

The FSD operates firmly within the context of the wider education policy landscape in Ireland, which emphasises the importance of the system being one in which students of all backgrounds can succeed within the mainstream, including those with disabilities. The FSD is designed to complement, rather than substitute for, the core system. The funding of the delivery of services and accommodations resourced by the FSD is underpinned by key principles including the shared understanding that the purpose of funded services is to support the development of independent learning, inclusive education environments and an overarching commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement of services to deliver best practice supports for students.

The FSD also aligns with the provisions of relevant legislation such as the Universities Act 1997 and the Technological Universities Act 2018 that include the promotion of equality of opportunity among students as one of the functions of HEIs. The Higher Education Authority Act 1971 also confers the HEA with the function of promoting the equality of opportunity in higher education.

PART B – ELIGIBILITY AND EXPENDITURE RULES

B1   FSD funding allocation for 2023

HEIs are required to complete an FSD Resource Allocation Return (FSD RAR) by 30 October 2022 detailing the number of students with disabilities and the services and accommodations they required during the 2021/22 academic year (i.e. from 1/10/2021 to 30/09/2022). The data in this return will be used to inform the FSD funding allocation for 2023.

The FSD RAR should reflect student numbers as at 1 March 2022.

B2   Disclosure of need

The initial decision around disclosure about the need for support rests with the individual. Where a HEI collects personal data from a student, the HEI should provide the student with all of the information as stipulated in article 13 of the GDPR. Please liaise with your institution's Data Protection Officer for further information and guidance.

B3   Assessment of need

Prior to requesting supports and services, HEIs must, in collaboration with the student, complete a needs assessment and document the relevant information.

A needs assessment form (see Appendix 1) must be completed for each student included in the FSD RAR and should be maintained by the HEI for verification and audit by the HEA.

The needs assessment form is the source document that determines the supports and accommodations that will be requested on the student's behalf. Student participation in the assessment process is essential. It should be noted, however, that the document is the HEI's document and the HEI is ultimately responsible for decisions on the most appropriate support plan to meet the needs of the student.

Forms can be designed to protect a student's identity by using only a number or code during the process of evaluating applications. All information provided by students must be processed in compliance with data protection legislation.

HEIs should satisfy themselves that the information provided is true, complete and accurate and that assistance from other sources has not been received for the stated purpose/service which is the subject of the assessment.

B4   Compliance with data protection requirements

The HEA will ensure that all HEIs covered by the FSD sign a standard FSD data sharing agreement which will govern the sharing and ensure it is compliant with data protection legislation.

Students should be informed by the HEI of the data protection implications of providing their personal data. They should be informed that:

- personal data collected as part of the application process may be processed for the purposes of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the operation of the FSD;
- this personal data may include special category data, e.g. sensitive data such as health data, where necessary, and;
- their data may be shared with third parties such as the HEA for the purposes of allocating funding and for monitoring.

Where a HEI collects personal data from a student, the HEI should provide the student with all of the information as stipulated in Article 13 of the GDPR. Please liaise with your institution's Data Protection Officer for further information and guidance.

B5   Who is eligible for support under the FSD?

To be eligible for support under the FSD, a student must meet the following conditions:

- have a verifiable disability as outlined in **part D** of these guidelines
- meet the nationality and residency criteria as outlined in **Appendix 2**
- be a participant on a full-time or part-time course as outlined in **Appendix 3**
- have a verified need for specific supports to enable participation on their chosen course

B6   Eligible expenditure

Funding can be used to provide supports and accommodations in any of the following broad categories:

a. assistive technology equipment and software (including student training)
b. non-medical helpers (e.g. personal assistants, notetakers)
c. academic/learning support
d. supports for students who are deaf or hard of hearing (e.g. sign language interpreters, SpeedText)
e. transport support

Only costs associated with the delivery of services and accommodations directly to eligible students are covered under the FSD. Developmental costs e.g. staff training and development are not eligible.

HEIs are required to comply with European and national procurement guidelines when procuring services or accommodations in relation to the FSD, and, where appropriate, explore opportunities to procure services or accommodations using a 'shared service' approach.

HEIs receive block grant funding in respect of FSD for a full calendar year (the allocation is based on the RAR return for the previous academic year). It is a matter for disability support staff in HEIs to complete a needs assessment in respect of each student. On completion of the needs assessment, disability support staff determine the appropriate supports required by students and FSD funding may be used to provide these supports provided that they are consistent with the categories of eligible expenditure listed above. Disability support staff must be able to justify all FSD expenditure as being consistent with the eligible categories.

HEIs are encouraged to complement FSD funding from within the Institution for the purposes of provision of disability services. A contingency fund to provide additional support to HEIs which experience significant year-on-year increases in applications for support, in particular from high needs students, has been established (see further detail below). The HEA will not provide additional funding to a HEI if it exceeds its allocation for the given year.

B7   Ineligible expenditure

The FSD does not cover expenditure for any of the following:

- assessment or diagnosis of a disability
- any medical equipment, assistance or support
- services that can reasonably be expected to be provided by the HEI or by another agency (e.g. HSE)
- course-related equipment, materials or software (i.e. applicable to all students on the course)
- support or assistance provided outside the academic year, or periods during the academic year when the HEI is closed (save for the circumstances set out in sections C2, C5 and C8)
- subsistence, mileage and accommodation costs for personal assistants, notetakers, SpeedText operators or Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreters
- staff training and development
- policy work or research
- student accommodation (i.e. on-campus or off-campus)
- salaries of staff in disability or access services involved in administrative work
- membership fees or subscriptions (i.e. AHEAD or similar)

B8   Financial and data requirements

Financial period for the FSD

The financial year for the 2023 FSD is 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023.

Financial reporting requirements

In line with existing practice, HEIs are asked to maintain full and appropriate records of all transactions and assistance given to each student.

Record-keeping and financial reporting for the FSD are necessary to establish the ongoing position of HEIs regarding the allocation of the fund locally and to inform national policy.

HEIs are required to complete and submit an annual expenditure report[2] (see Appendix 4).

There is also a requirement for a mid-year financial report which will be issued to HEIs in June each year. The closing date is to be advised.

B9   Resource Allocation Return

The FSD Resource Allocation Return (RAR) template will be issued electronically by the HEA to the HEIs. The return template should be completed electronically and submitted by email to the HEA by the date indicated. The 2021/22 FSD RAR is currently being updated and will be circulated to HEIs in due course.

The FSD RAR will capture the total number of eligible students supported under the fund in the academic year concerned, relevant information about their support needs, and details of specific supports provided. These variables will feed into calculations of the HEI's allocation under the FSD for the next calendar year.

Note: the HEA reserves the right to request that the HEI provides supporting documentation associated with expenditure covered under the FSD, including a copy of the needs assessment form, evidence of disability, proof that the student meets the residence/nationality criteria and confirmation of registration/participation on an approved course. This may be requested as part of an audit, site visit or other monitoring measures that may be implemented.

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[2] To be revised and updated in due course

SUBMISSION OF FSD RAR

The FSD RAR should be forwarded electronically to fsd@hea.ie.

The HEA will provide ongoing advice and support to HEIs and any queries can be directed to fsd@hea.ie.

B10   Document retention

Source documentation from which the returns are prepared must be retained in line with standard record retention requirements in the event of an inspection or audit by the following:

- Higher Education Authority or its nominated agents
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- Comptroller and Auditor General

B11   Strategic Initiatives

In January 2021, following approval by the HEA Executive, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, announced funding for the development of strategic initiatives relating to disability support services in HEIs. These initiatives are being funded from historical underspends in HEIs' FSD allocations. Separate reporting arrangements apply to these initiatives. As per a HEA communication to HEIs in December 2021 that granted approval for a carryover of funds in respect of these projects into 2022, HEIs are required to take all necessary steps to complete the projects within the 2021/22 academic year.

PART C – GUIDANCE ON SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

This section provides information on the types of services and accommodations that fall within the expenditure scope of the FSD. However, it is not exhaustive. It is a matter for disability support staff to conduct the needs assessment and satisfy him/herself that the FSD expenditure used to provide supports is consistent with the eligibility categories.

The HEA strongly recommends that HEIs plan to implement goal 1 of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 (as extended to 2021 by the Progress Review of the National Access Plan and Priorities to 2021 published in December 2018) to mainstream inclusive practices across the whole HEI. Such a plan will embed inclusive practices across all faculties and services and help to ensure that disability services are as effective as possible in supporting students who require additional supports. A new national access plan is currently in development and is expected to be published in Q3 2022.

Publications, resources and professional training are available that can help advise the development of professional disability services in higher education. AHEAD and DAWN have prepared guidance on The Role of the Disability Officer and the Disability Service in Higher Education in Ireland. AHEAD also offers an online training course, AHEADSTART, on supporting students with disabilities.

Only costs associated with the delivery of services and accommodations directly to eligible students are covered under the FSD. Developmental costs, e.g. staff training and development, are **not eligible**.

In cases where HEIs employ personnel to deliver supports, the contractual relationship and the rights and duties embodied within it are strictly between the individual employee and the HEI.

Covid-19 and hybrid learning

Although HEIs have in general returned to on-campus learning, it is still to be expected that online or alternative methods of teaching, learning and assessment will continue in some form. In that context, it is still appropriate for students to be supported under the FSD once the supports are in line with what is deemed eligible in the FSD guidelines. The HEA continues to encourage HEIs to consider how existing services can be reconfigured to meet the needs of students with disabilities and provide supports during the Covid-19 pandemic while still operating within the FSD guidelines.

C1   Assistive technology equipment and software

Assistive technology is defined as any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customised/custom-built, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

The FSD may also be used to cover training for students in the use of such technology. Training for staff is not considered eligible.

C2   Non-medical helpers

Non-medical helpers, such as personal assistants or notetakers, provide help to students with disabilities who require assistance with the logistical and personal care requirements associated with attendance on a course of study. Funding can be used to provide the service to a student in respect of the periods a student is on campus (including at evenings or weekends) and, if required, to assist the student with commuting to and from college. In general, personal assistance is only provided to students with physical/mobility disabilities and blind/visually impaired students who require such assistance to participate in their chosen course of study. However, it is recognised that students with non-physical disabilities may also require non-medical help and assistance during their studies.

Many students with severe physical/mobility disabilities may require a personal assistant for the entire period each day that the student is in college. Other students may only require personal assistance at certain times of the college day. Blind/visually impaired students may require personal assistance for a short period at the beginning of the academic year, until they have familiarised themselves with their surroundings. As the independence of the student is compromised using a personal assistant, the service should only be provided when necessary and after the full range of options have been explored. Decisions associated with the engagement of a personal assistant are with the HEI, taking account, where appropriate, of the student's wishes/preferences.

In relation to non-medical helper supports that may be required outside the normal academic year, e.g. during summer months, these may be considered eligible under the FSD in the case of students with particular or specific high needs who may require access to facilities or services outside the normal academic year, e.g. postgraduate students, access to library or other services, to support a student's academic progression and completion.

The FSD can also be used to support students wishing to attend academic or research conferences or events related to their course of study.

Notetakers

Students with disabilities that affect their ability to record class notes may be eligible for notetaking support. However, a range of alternative solutions are increasingly in place in education which can reduce the need, partly or fully, for the traditional notetaking approach. Lecturers making notes available to students in advance, preferably online, reduces the need for dedicated notetakers. Recording of lectures or the use of products such as the Livescribe pen are other options. HEI disability services should explore all options before recommending the provision of a notetaker. Notetaking is not a substitute for a student's full participation in each class. Notetaking support can be provided during academic contact hours only.

C3   Academic/learning support

Learning support is important for all students, including those with disabilities. For this group, the development of skills, tools and techniques that minimise or eliminate any barriers presented by the learning environment are particularly critical to student success and progression in higher education and beyond.

In addition to assistive technology, study skills support is the most common category of learning support required by students with learning difficulties. This includes memorisation, mind mapping, taking notes, writing skills (including spelling and grammar checkers) and personal learning strategies. It can be delivered in small groups or individually, and there are an increasing range of online applications/tutorials available. Both study skills support and specialist learning supports may also be needed by students with mental health difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions and those with multiple disabilities.

Funding is not available for the provision of tutorials that are a direct substitute for core teaching where the student is not prevented because of their disability from participating in core lectures or class-wide tutorials. The HEI should be satisfied that subject-specific tutorials for which funding may be used have been identified as part of an assessment of needs as reasonable accommodation resulting from the impact of a student's condition/disability.

C4   Supports for students who are deaf or hard of hearing

Supports such as ISL interpreters and SpeedText

ISL is an officially recognised language under the [Irish Sign Language Act 2017](#) and is regarded as the first language of its users (the deaf community). ISL interpreters translate between English and the language and vice-versa. ISL can be provided during academic contact hours only.

SpeedText is an electronic class synopsis and notetaking system using two laptops, one for the deaf or hard-of-hearing person (for real-time display) and the other for the specially trained operator (for input). A SpeedText operator is trained in condensing language, thus transmitting the meaning of the points discussed, not the actual word-for-word transcription. SpeedText is not a verbatim service. It is primarily for deaf/hard-of-hearing people who have a good command of the English language. SpeedText can be provided during academic contact hours only.

C5   Transport supports

Some students with disabilities have significant, additional travel costs to pay to get to and from their HEI. Funding is available for this purpose primarily for the support of students with physical/mobility difficulties or blind/visually impaired students.

It is recognised that in some cases, the needs assessment may determine that because of their disability, a student incurs additional transport costs in attending college beyond those faced by any student commuting from the same area.

In relation to private transport, a HEI must be satisfied that the use of private transport is fully justified, the cost is legitimate and reasonable and that any reimbursements are in line with relevant HEI or public sector policies e.g. mileage rates.

In relation to transport supports year that may be required outside the normal academic year, e.g. during summer months, these may be considered eligible under the FSD in the case of students with particular or specific high needs who may require access to facilities or services outside the normal academic year, e.g. postgraduate students, access to library or other services, to support a student's academic progression and completion.

The FSD can also be used to support students wishing to attend academic or research conferences or events related to their course of study.

HEI personnel should be satisfied that the need to avail of the proposed transport and the incurrence of additional expenses for the student to participate equitably is supported by the diagnosis in the assessment of disability.

C6   Inclusion of supports for students on part-time courses

Since 2018, part-time students in higher education are supported by the FSD.

C7   Examination supports

In line with the overall principles of the FSD, supports to students with disabilities should be mainstreamed as much as possible within a HEI. This also applies to examination supports or accommodation. However, if specific high-level supports are required for examinations, these may be considered eligible under the FSD in respect of the categories of eligible expenditure outlined in B6.

C8   Supports outside the academic year and attendance at academic conferences

In line with the categories of ineligible expenditure outlined in B7, support or assistance provided outside the academic year, or periods during the academic year when the HEI is closed, are not covered by the FSD.

However, HEIs have discretion to consider cases, e.g. students with particular or specific high needs who may require assistance to be able to access facilities or services outside the normal academic year, e.g. postgraduate students, access to library or other services, to support a student's academic progression and completion.

The FSD can also be used to support students wishing to attend academic or research conferences or events related to their course of study.

C9   Work placements and internships

Work placements and internships are an increasing feature of many programmes in HEIs. Students with disabilities undertaking such placements as part of their studies may continue to be supported under the FSD in respect of the categories of eligible expenditure outlined in B6. HEIs and employers should work together to identify any particular student needs that may need to be accommodated by an employer in hosting a student as part of their work placement or internship.

PART D – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SUPPORT

The criteria set out in this section are specifically associated with the FSD and HEIs should not assume that the same criteria apply in other contexts, e.g. obligations under law.

The FSD may be used for eligible students who have provided evidence of disability documentation that meets the criteria for the FSD as set out below. Responsibility for collecting and screening of the documentation to establish that it meets the criteria is with the HEI, and such documentation should be retained on file by the HEI.

Acceptable evidence of disability documentation is either:

a. a report that meets the criteria as set out in the table below, or
b. the CAO/Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) evidence of disability form that meets the criteria as set out below where the student has completed this step as part of a CAO application. Please note that the CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is not considered acceptable as evidence of disability in the case of specific learning difficulties (dyslexia and dyscalculia) and students with DCD-dyspraxia/dysgraphia.

Where the CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is furnished, the requirements as stated on the form must be met (including that it be accompanied by the qualified health professional's stamp, business card or headed paper; or where the information from the qualified health professional is provided by a GP, it be accompanied by the GP's stamp, business card or headed paper).

Providers of reports must be appropriately qualified professionals and members of professional/regulatory bodies. Reports should be signed and on headed paper.

A GP's own diagnosis of a disability/condition is not acceptable as evidence of disability for the purposes of the FSD.

Following on from COVID-19, it is recognised that some students may not be able to produce evidence of disability in line with the evidence and eligibility criteria set out in the table below. In all cases relating to evidence of disability, an institution must satisfy itself as to the integrity and validity of the documentation provided and that it is consistent with the evidence of disability required under the FSD.

Please also note the following:

- Where supports are to be provided based on needs arising from more than one disability, appropriate evidence of disability documentation for each disability must be provided by the student and retained on file by the HEI.
- All HEIs should advise students and relevant third parties that any medical reports or professional opinions compiled by third parties in support of an application should only contain details relevant to the disability being outlined.
- Disability documentation which has been completed in a language other than English can be submitted, along with an English translation. This translation must be

conducted by an individual/organisation that is completely independent of the student.

Disability	Evidence and eligibility criteria	Age of report
Autism (including Asperger's Syndrome)	A report from an appropriately qualified consultant psychiatrist OR psychologist OR neurologist OR paediatrician providing a diagnosis of ASD	No age limit
Attention deficit disorder (ADD) **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**	A report from an appropriately qualified consultant psychiatrist OR psychologist OR neurologist OR paediatrician providing a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD	No age limit
Blind/ **Vision Impaired**	A report from one or more of the following: • ophthalmologist/ophthalmic surgeon providing a diagnosis of severe reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses. The diagnosis must be in relation to best-corrected visual acuity or field of vision • a letter from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland confirming registration • a letter from the principal from a school for the blind confirming attendance	No age limit
Deaf/ **Hard of Hearing**	A report from one or more of the following: • an audiogram from a professionally qualified audiologist and/or ENT consultant, indicating moderate to profound bilateral hearing loss or unilateral moderate hearing loss • a letter from the principal from a school for the deaf confirming attendance • existing report from ENT consultant or Cochlear Implant Programme Coordinator confirming cochlear implant or bone anchored hearing aid	No age limit
Developmental co-ordination disorder (dyspraxia/dysgraphia)	A report from a psychologist OR an occupational therapist OR chartered physiotherapist OR neurologist OR paediatrician diagnosing developmental co-ordination disorder (dyspraxia) The CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is **not** acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability	No age limit

Disability	Evidence and eligibility criteria	Age of report
Mental health condition (for example, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, clinical depression, severe anxiety, severe phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder, severe eating disorders and psychosis)	A report from a consultant psychiatrist OR specialist registrar	Less than five years
Neurological condition	A report from one or more of the following: • Neurological conditions – neurologist OR another relevant consultant • Speech and language disabilities – speech and language therapist	No age limit
Significant ongoing illness	A report diagnosing a significant ongoing illness such as: • Diabetes type 1 – endocrinologist OR paediatrician • Cystic fibrosis – consultant respiratory physician OR pediatrician • Gastroenterology condition – gastroenterologist • Other – consultant OR consultant registrar	Less than five years
Speech and Language Communication Disorder (including (but not exclusively) Stammering; Receptive and/or Expressive Language Disorders; Unintelligibility due to a phonological disorder, articulation disorder associated with structural anomalies; Acquired communication disorders such as Aphasia, Anomia, Dysarthria, Dyspraxia resulting from neurological conditions, or any neurodegenerative, or genetic disease associated with impaired communication and social interaction)	A report from a speech and language therapist	No age limit
Physical/mobility	A report from an orthopaedic consultant OR other relevant specialist diagnosing a significant physical or mobility difficulty	No age limit

Disability	Evidence and eligibility criteria	Age of report
Specific learning difficulties (dyslexia or dyscalculia)	The report of a psycho-educational assessment by a psychologist OR by an assessor (PATOSS accredited) diagnosing a specific learning difficulty Students may be asked for their latest assessment scores/educational reports to assist HEIs in determining the appropriate level of support All tests used in the assessment must be valid, reliable and age appropriate The CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is **not** acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability	No age limit

PART E – ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

E1   Allocation and payment of funding

A single, annual allocation of FSD funding will be made to HEIs by the HEA. This allocation will be made as early as possible in the year. Additional allocations may be made under the Contingency Fund (see E4 below). No further supplementary allocations will be made.

FSD will be allocated as a block grant to HEIs, with the subsequent internal allocation to be managed at the discretion of the HEIs, so long as it meets the overall FSD guidelines for eligible and ineligible expenditure at B6 and B7 above.

FSD funding is allocated based on weighted student numbers and levels of need as reported by HEIs to the HEA in their RARs. A table of FSD student numbers by HEI will be circulated each year to all HEIs as part of the HEA system of ensuring consistency. See E3 for more details about the FSD allocation model.

Funding will be provided in two instalments.

E2   Unspent balances

FSD underspends cannot be carried forward to future years and will be netted off future allocations. This applies to any current and future underspends.

E3   Model for allocating FSD funding

The approach to the allocation of FSD funding has been developed based on the recommendations of the [Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities](#).

FSD funding in one year will be allocated based on the number of students with disabilities in the preceding year, their weighted needs and supports provided under the following categories:

a. non-medical helpers (e.g. personal assistants, notetakers)
b. academic/learning support
c. supports for students who are deaf or hard of hearing (e.g. sign language interpreters, SpeedText)
d. transport support

FSD student numbers and data returned in the RARs will be analysed and converted into weighted student numbers, based on relative costs of different levels of need.

A HEI's percentage share of weighted FSD student numbers will determine its share of the overall FSD grant funding available.

The census date for count of FSD students is 1 March.

E4   Contingency Fund

A contingency fund to provide additional support to HEIs who experience significant year-on-year increases in applications for support, in particular from high needs students, has been established as previously agreed in the context of transition to allocating funds on the basis of previous year student numbers. The fund usually opens for applications in September each year.

It should be noted that no additional funding from the contingency fund will be provided to cover the overspend on disability services. The eligibility criteria for FSD (students and expenditure) also apply to this funding.

Appendix 1- Sample Needs Assessment Form

<u>Nature of disability</u>

<u>Nature of supports/assistance required</u>

Non-medical support	
Personal assistant	

Deaf/hard of hearing support	
Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter	
SpeedText	

Assistive technology	
Hardware	e.g. laptop (please specify)
Software	e.g. audio notetaker, texthelp etc.

Academic/learning support	
Non-medical helper support	e.g. specialist learning supports e.g. for students with SLD, MHC, ASD
General study support	e.g. study skills support

Transport cost

Alternative formats

Appendix 2- Residency, Nationality and Immigration Criteria

Residency

To be eligible for support under the FSD, a student must be legally resident in Ireland for at least three of the five years up to the day before their approved course commences in an approved HEI. If the student does not qualify at the beginning of their course, it is possible for them to meet this requirement during their studies. This should be reviewed at the beginning of an academic year.

Nationality

To qualify the student must be either:
- an Irish national
- a national of another EU member state, the European Economic Area (EEA), UK or Switzerland

Students who are non-EU nationals, but who are eligible for free or reduced fees in line with the criteria for the Free Fees Initiative, may be considered eligible for funding under the FSD subject to meeting other relevant FSD criteria.

Appendix 3- Approved Courses and HEIs

Full-time undergraduate courses of not less than two years in duration

    or

Part-time undergraduate courses of not less than one year in duration

    or

Postgraduate courses (full- or part-time) of not less than one year in duration.

The above covers courses on Levels 6-10 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#).

Students registered on online courses are eligible for supports under the FSD subject to the criteria set out elsewhere in these Guidelines.

Students registered on Springboard+ or Human Capital Initiative (HCI) courses provided by HEIs in the below list are also eligible for supports under the FSD.

Repeat students are covered by the FSD provided they are repeating a year of study and continue to meet the other relevant eligibility criteria in Appendices 2 and 3. In the case of students who may be repeating e.g. a module or exam only, HEIs have discretion to consider exceptional circumstances, e.g. students with particular or specific high needs on a case-by-case basis.

Students on apprenticeship courses are also covered by the FSD in respect of the period(s) when they are attending lectures in a HEI for the period of their study.

Approved HEIs:

    Dublin City University
    University College Cork
    University College Dublin
    National University of Ireland, Galway (including Shannon College)
    Maynooth University
    Trinity College Dublin
    University of Limerick

    Technological University Dublin
    Munster Technological University
    Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
    Atlantic Technological University
    South East Technological University
    Dundalk Institute of Technology
    Institute of Art, Design and Technology Dún Laoghaire

Marino Institute of Education
National College of Art & Design
National College of Ireland
Mary Immaculate College
St Angela's College

St Patrick's College, Pontifical University of Maynooth
Carlow College (St Patrick's)
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences
St Nicholas Montessori College
The Honorable Society of King's Inns
The Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place

Appendix 4- Sample Annual Expenditure Report 2022

Sample Annual Expenditure Report 2022[3]

HEI: _____

Contact Person: _____ **Email**: _____

Annual summary of expenditure

A.	2022 allocation	€
B.	**Expenditure of 2022 allocation as at 31 December 2022**	€
C.	**Underspend (will be deducted from 2023 allocation)(A-B)**	€

The undersigned, being the operational agency official responsible for the preparation of this return, hereby certifies:

a. that the figures contained in this return are accurate and complete
b. that the costs covered by this claim have already been incurred and amounts given in this return have actually been expended.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature of chief financial officer/vice-president of finance

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

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[3] To be revised and updated in due course

Appendix 5 – Useful Links

AHEAD
AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to creative inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities. The main focus of their work is further education and training, higher education and graduate employment.
http://www.ahead.ie/

Student Finance
This website provides useful information on financial support for further and higher education.
http://www.studentfinance.ie/

Disability Access Route to Education
The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a college and university admissions scheme which offers places at reduced points to school leavers with disabilities.
http://www.accesscollege.ie/

Enable Ireland
Enable Ireland's mission is to work in partnership with those who use their services to achieve maximum independence, choice and inclusion in their communities.
http://www.enableireland.ie/

National Council of the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)
NCBI, the national sight loss agency, is a not-for-profit charitable organisation which provides support and services nationwide to people experiencing sight loss.
http://www.ncbi.ie/

Chime – the National Charity for Deafness and Hearing Loss
Chime's mission is to limit the impact of deafness and hearing loss through promoting accessibility, creating supportive communities, and enabling personal choice and community participation.
https://www.chime.ie/

Aspire
The Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland's aim is to support people with Asperger Syndrome to lead full and independent lives.
info@aspireireland.ie
https://www.aspireireland.ie

Dyslexia Association of Ireland
The Dyslexia Association of Ireland aims to promote the understanding, treatment and prevention of the problems which can be associated with dyslexia, a specific learning disability.
http://www.dyslexia.ie/

The Irish Wheelchair Association
The Irish Wheelchair Association is Ireland's leading organisation for people with physical disabilities and is a driving force for change, development and enhancements in the quality of life of people with disabilities in Ireland.
http://www.iwa.ie/

EmployAbility
EmployAbility services provide an employment support service for people with a:
- health condition
- injury
- illness
- disability

https://www.gov.ie/en/service/8578c4-access-the-employability-service/

Disability Federation of Ireland
Disability Federation of Ireland is the national support organisation for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions.
http://www.disability-federation.ie/

Support for Erasmus Students and Staff with a Disability
The National Agency (HEA) makes available additional support to assist students and staff with the extra costs incurred by those who wish to undertake an Erasmus+ mobility programme. Students/staff may be awarded Erasmus+ support to help cover the travel and subsistence costs (including insurance and visa costs) incurred during their study period abroad.
http://eurireland.ie/i-am-a/erasmus-student/supplementary-support-for-students-with-disabilitiesspecial-needs/

European Students' Union
The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 46 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The NUS are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. ESU represents over 20 million students in Europe.
http://www.esu-online.org/