

Fund for Students with Disabilities

Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions in EEA Member States, United Kingdom and Switzerland

Academic Year 2025/26



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science



An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

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PART A – FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (FSD)

A1 - Introduction

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) allocates funding to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the provision of services and supports **to full-time students** with disabilities. This includes eligible students (see Appendix 1) studying on full-time undergraduate courses in publicly funded institutions in the EEA member states, United Kingdom and Switzerland (as well as eligible students undertaking full-time undergraduate or postgraduate courses in publicly funded institutions in Northern Ireland **only**).

The FSD for higher education institutions is administered by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). The FSD supports the implementation of Ireland's [National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028](#).

Appendix 1 sets out the students intended to be supported by these guidelines.

The FSD operates in addition to the legal framework supporting the rights of students with disabilities to access further and higher education. The Fund also operates in addition to mainstream resources and services in place in institutions, which include health services, student support services, counselling services, etc.

This document provides full details about the eligibility criteria for support under the FSD, eligible/ineligible expenditure under the Fund and the application procedure.

A2 - FSD funding allocation and 2025/26 applications

There is a restricted budget available under the FSD. It is sometimes necessary to cap funding levels per student to ensure that all eligible applicants receive at least a minimum level of support. Therefore, funding allocations made may be less than that applied for.

First-time applicants

Disability Offices of institutions wishing to avail of FSD to contribute to the costs of supports and services to students should request an Application Form by emailing fsd@hea.ie. A first-time application should be submitted on the standard application form by the closing date specified below, along with the appropriate required medical evidence of disability and the collated return for the Institution (see Part D). Prior to requesting supports and services, HEIs should, in collaboration with the student, complete a needs assessment and document the relevant information. The needs assessment should be submitted if available.



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Following review of the application and submitted documents, the HEA will notify the institution of the eligibility/ineligibility of the application. If an application is successful, details of funding will be provided in writing to institutions followed by allocation of the approved funding (February/March 2026).

In cases where an application has not been approved, or only partially approved, the institution will be notified to this effect. An application may be reviewed on submission of new information (for example outstanding or up-to-date supporting documentation) within the final application deadline date.

First-time applicants need not be exclusively those in the first year of their course in 2025/26 (i.e., some students with a disability may not present with a request for supports for the first time until a later year of their course).

Renewal of applications

Renewal applications for students previously approved for the FSD should be submitted on the standard renewal application form; no supporting documentation is needed to be submitted with a renewal application form. However, if a renewal student had a change in their circumstances since their first-time application form, the '*Change of Circumstances*' form must be completed and submitted along with the appropriate required medical evidence, if necessary.

Application forms are available on request from the Higher Education Authority (HEA), by contacting fsd@hea.ie.

Closing dates

There are two closing dates for the receipt of applications:

- The **first round of applications** should be submitted on or before **17 October 2025**.
- The **final closing date** for receipt of late applications is **21 November 2025**.

It is recommended that applications be submitted as soon as possible after the student has presented to the institution with a request for support. **No applications received after the final closing date will be processed.**

In determining the value of supports required, the HEA will use the applicable currency exchange rate on the date of the first deadline date of receipt of applications.



A3 - FSD vs. UK's Disabled Students' Allowances

There are a number of **differences between the FSD and the UK's Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)**. The key differences are:

- Students do not submit applications to the **FSD**; rather, institutions **submit applications on the student's behalf**.
- If an application is successful, **funding will be paid to the institution** which manages the funding on the student's behalf. FSD funding is not paid directly either to the student or third-party service/equipment providers.
- Students must be enrolled on a full-time undergraduate course (or, in the case of Northern Ireland only, a full-time undergraduate course or a full-time postgraduate course). **Students on part-time courses are not eligible**.
- **A letter from a GP is not accepted as a medical diagnosis evidence of disability**. Please see Part D for details of the medical evidence required.
- Institutions are required to submit **a renewal application** (by collated return) for support for each year of a student's course.
- The scope of the scheme in any financial year is **determined by the funds available**. Therefore, funding awards made may be less than applied for.



PART B – ELIGIBILITY AND EXPENDITURE RULES

B1 - Eligible courses

An eligible student should be enrolled on a **full-time undergraduate course of not less than two years in duration** (see Appendix 2). Eligible students undertaking study in a publicly funded higher education institution in Northern Ireland can be enrolled on a full-time undergraduate course of not less than two years in duration, or a full-time postgraduate course of not less than one year in duration (see Appendix 2).

B2 - Who is eligible for support under the FSD?

To be eligible for support under the FSD, a student on an approved course should meet **all** 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 1**
- be a participant on a full-time undergraduate course in a publicly funded higher education institution (or a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate course in a publicly funded higher education institution in Northern Ireland)
- have a verified need for specific supports to enable participation on their chosen course

B3 - Eligible expenditure

Funding can be used to provide **supports and accommodations** (see PART C) 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**.

Where relevant, institutions are required to comply with 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.



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 toward 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.

B4 - 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 institution (e.g., counselling service) or by another agency (e.g., local health service)
- 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 institution is closed (save for the circumstances set out in sections C2, C5 and C7)
- subsistence, mileage and accommodation costs for personal assistants, note-takers, SpeedText operators or Irish sign language (ISL) interpreters (save for when these assistants are supporting students attending academic or research conferences or events related to their course of study outside their area of residence).
- 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.

B5 - Compliance with data protection requirements

FSD Data Sharing Agreement

The HEA will ensure that all HEIs applying for funding sign a standard FSD Data Sharing Agreement which will govern the sharing of data and ensure it is compliant with data protection legislation. Where necessary this will identify an appropriate transfer mechanism if the sharing is outside the EEA. **No data will be processed until the standard FSD Data Sharing Agreement is signed by the institution.**



Student data

Students should be informed of the data protection implications of providing their personal data. Students 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.

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.

Please liaise with your institution's Data Protection Officer for further information and guidance

B6 - Financial requirements

Financial period for the FSD

The financial year for the 2025/26 FSD is **1 October 2025 – 30 September 2026**.

The HEA will take account of any portion of the FSD tranche which is not spent in an institution on 30 September each year in the transfer of funding to that institution for the following year, where applicable. The HEA has the right to seek the return of all underspends.

Financial reporting requirements

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

Institutions are required to submit an **End of Year Expenditure Form** for the previous year (see Appendix 4). This form should include the overall amount spent and any unspent FSD funds held by the institution from the allocation made in the relevant year and/or in previous years, as applicable.



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

Data is also required on the types of cost items for which funding is allocated.



PART C – GUIDANCE ON TYPES OF 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 to be satisfied that FSD expenditure is consistent with the eligibility categories.

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.

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 institution, taking account of, where appropriate, 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. 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. 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. Institutional 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 get to and from college. Funding is available for this purpose for 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 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., access to library or other services, to support a student's academic progression and completion.

Institutional 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.

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



C6 - Examination supports

In line with the overall principles of the FSD, supports to students with disabilities should be mainstreamed as much as possible within an institution. 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 above in B3.

C7 - Supports outside the academic year and attendance at academic conferences

In line with the categories of ineligible expenditure outlined in B4, support or assistance provided outside the academic year, or periods during the academic year when the institution is closed, are **not** covered by the FSD.

However, institutions 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. 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.

C8 - Work placements and internships

Work placements and internships are an increasing feature of many programmes. 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 B3. Institutions 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 – EVIDENCE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SUPPORT

This section applies to eligible students for which a funding request is being made for the first time. The criteria set out in this section are specifically associated with the FSD and institutions should not assume that the same criteria apply in other contexts, e.g., obligations under law.

Funding can be requested 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 institution and such documentation should be retained on file by the institution.

Acceptable evidence of disability documentation is either:

- a. a report (or comprehensive letter¹) 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 must 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.

It is important to note that a GP's own diagnosis of a disability/condition is not acceptable as evidence of disability for the purposes of the FSD.

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.

¹ A comprehensive letter from appropriately qualified professionals and members of professional/regulatory bodies should detail the nature and extent of disability, and how it may affect the student's ability to participate in education.



Please also note the following:

- Where a funding request is 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 institution.
- All institutions 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	A report from an appropriately qualified consultant psychiatrist OR psychologist OR neurologist OR paediatrician providing a diagnosis of Autism	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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



Disability	Evidence and eligibility criteria	Age of report
Deaf/ Hard of Hearing	<p>A report from one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (DCD) – Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia	<p>A report from an occupational therapist OR chartered physiotherapist OR neurologist OR paediatrician diagnosing developmental co-ordination disorder (dyspraxia)</p> <p><i>The CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is not acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability</i></p>	No age limit
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 listed on the Specialist Register of the Medical Council of Ireland or psychiatric registrar in cases where the student is in the care of a consultant psychiatrist	Less than five years
Neurological condition (Including (but not exclusively) Brain Injury and Epilepsy)	<p>A report from a Neurologist OR other relevant Consultant</p> <p>In cases where the student is in the care of a Neurologist or another relevant Consultant, the</p>	No age limit



Disability	Evidence and eligibility criteria	Age of report
	evidence of a disability can be provided by a Registrar who is a member of their team	
Significant ongoing illness (Including (but not exclusively) Diabetes Type 1, Cystic Fibrosis (CF), Severe Crohn's Disease, Severe Ulcerative Colitis and Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD), Chronic Fatigue, Cancers (including those in remission from Cancer))	A report diagnosing a significant ongoing illness such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diabetes type 1 – endocrinologist OR paediatrician Cystic fibrosis – consultant respiratory physician OR paediatrician 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 Disability/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)	<p>A relevant diagnostic assessment report from a suitably qualified educational psychologist or specialist teacher with current Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) or active AMBDA in dyslexia or dyscalculia as appropriate (see https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/ for further information).</p> <p>Students may be asked for their latest assessment scores/educational reports to assist HEIs in determining the appropriate level of support.</p> <p>All tests used in the assessment must be valid, reliable and age appropriate.</p> <p><i>The CAO/DARE evidence of disability form is not acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability.</i></p>	No age limit



PART E – OUTCOMES OF APPLICATIONS AND ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION

E1 - Notification of outcome of applications

Details of funding approved will be provided in writing to institutions. Students will not be informed individually by the HEA of the outcome of their application. Confirmation of registration will be required to trigger transfer of funding to institutions.

In cases where an application has not been approved, or only partially approved, the institution will be notified to this effect. An application may be reviewed on submission of new information (for example outstanding or up-to-date supporting documentation) within the final application deadline date (21 November 2025).

E2 - Allocation for needs assessment

Previously the FSD included provision for a per-capita amount of up to €400 to assist with verifiable, additional cost to the institution of completing a needs assessment for approved first-time applicants. **For 2025/26 there will be a contribution amount awarded towards the per-capita amount in proportion to the overall fund available and the number of students who apply for funding.** This payment will only be provided if appropriate **evidence of cost associated with a needs assessment** is submitted to the HEA with the HEI's application for FSD funding.

It will not be possible to approve the per-capita funding for a needs assessment in advance of the approval of equipment, supports and services. Where an application to the FSD is not approved (for example due to insufficient evidence of disability documentation), funding will not be approved in respect of a needs assessment regardless of whether or not an assessment has been carried out by the institution.

Similar to other items funded under the FSD, the per-capita subvention for a needs assessment can only be allocated in respect of individual confirmed students approved under the FSD in 2025/26.

E3 - Per-capita allocation for students with specific learning difficulties

The HEA uses a standard per capita allocation for each approved first-time application made by institutions on behalf of students with specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia/dyscalculia and dyspraxia/dysgraphia). The per capita allocation is designed to provide for the costs of assistive technology and academic support for this cohort of students.



PART F –TIMELINE FOR THE 2025/26 APPLICATION PROCESS

- **Round 1 closing date:** 17 October 2025
- **Late application closing date:** 21 November 2025

Applications should be forwarded on or before **Friday 17 October 2025** for consideration under the first funding round.

The final closing date for receipt of late applications is **Friday 21 November 2025**; however, it is recommended that applications be submitted as soon as possible after the student has presented to the institution with a request for support.

No applications received after the final closing date will be processed in 2025/26.

SUBMISSION OF FSD APPLICATION FORMS

Applications should be forwarded electronically to fsd@hea.ie.

The HEA will provide ongoing advice and support to institutions and any queries can be directed to fsd@hea.ie or by phoning +353 (0)1-2317100.



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APPENDIX 1 – RESIDENCY, NATIONALITY, AND IMMIGRATION CRITERIA

Residency

In order 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 institution.

Nationality

To qualify the student must be either:

- an Irish national,
- a national of another EU member state, the UK, the European Economic Area (EEA)² or Switzerland.

Immigration status

Students who are non-EU nationals, but who would ordinarily be 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.

Note: Ireland in this context refers to the Republic of Ireland. Students ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland do not meet the residency criteria for the FSD. Further information on support for students with disabilities from Northern Ireland is available from www.studentfinanci.co.uk.

² See Appendix 3



APPENDIX 2 – APPROVED COURSES

Full-time undergraduate courses of not less than two years duration pursued in a university or higher education institution which is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds in an EEA Member State, the United Kingdom or Switzerland (or a full-time undergraduate course of not less than two years duration or a full-time postgraduate course of not less than one year in duration pursued in a university or higher education institution in Northern Ireland which is maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from public funds), with the **exception of the following:**

1. courses in colleges of further and higher education (other than courses which are at higher national diploma level or higher);
2. courses provided in a college which are offered in private commercial third-level colleges in the state in question, and which are validated by that college;
3. courses in colleges akin to private commercial colleges in Ireland.

Repeat students are also covered by the FSD provided they are repeating a year of study and continue to meet the other relevant eligibility criteria in Appendices 1 and 2. In the case of students who may be repeating e.g. a module or exam only, institutions 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 higher education institution for the period of their study.



APPENDIX 3 – EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (EEA) COUNTRIES

EU member states

Austria	Lithuania
Belgium	Luxembourg
Bulgaria	Malta
Croatia	Netherlands
Cyprus	Poland
Czech Republic	Portugal
Denmark	Romania
Estonia	Slovakia
Finland	Slovenia
France	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Greece	
Hungary	
Ireland	
Italy	
Latvia	

Non-EU member states

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway

For the 2025/26 academic year Irish students studying in the United Kingdom may continue to be supported under the FSD provided they meet the other criteria of the FSD e.g., eligibility criteria for support, approved course, and institution.



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APPENDIX 4 – (Sample) END OF YEAR ANNUAL EXPENDITURE REPORT 2024/25

Name of HEI:

Telephone Number:

Email:

A	2024/25 FSD allocation (As per your HEA's 2024/25 FSD Allocation and Payment Letter issued in early 2025)	€	-
B	Less your unspent balance 2023/24 (as per End of Year Report)	€	-
C	2024/25 FSD payment received (As per your HEA's 2024/25 FSD Allocation and Payment Letter issued in early 2025)	€	-
D	Your total FSD expenditure from 01/10/2024 to 30/09/2025	€	-
E	Unspent balance from 2024/25 allocation to be netted off 2025/26 allocation or recouped (A - D) *	€	-
<p>* If an unspent balance is reported for 2024-25, please outline in the space below the reasons why the funds were not fully spent.</p>			



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Annual expenditure returns 2024/25

Cost heading	Expenditure (€)
Non-medical support (inc Personal assistant	
<i>Deaf/hard of hearing supports</i>	
<i>Sign language interpreter</i>	
SpeedText	
Assistive technology	
Learning support	
Transport costs	
Other (Please specify)	
Total Expenditure	€ -

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 been expended.

Signature

Name

Title

Date



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