



Disability Support Fund

2026 Reporting Drop-In Sessions – FAQs

Wednesday 28/01/2026, Friday 27/02/2026

Program Intent

In 2025, the Australian Government committed to providing further support to students with disability and quadrupled the Disability Support Fund (DSF) component of the Disability Support Program (DSP) from \$13 million to \$53 million (indexed) per year. The underpinning intent of this funding increase is to provide **supplementary** support to assist universities in delivering more programs and services to empower students with disability to access, participate and succeed in undergraduate and post-graduate studies

The [amendment](#) to the [Higher Education Support \(Other Grants\) Guidelines 2022](#) operationalises this underpinning intent, setting out the expectations and conditions that apply to expenditure of DSF funding. As per the revised guidelines (Part 3, Division 1, Section 41) a broader range of activities are now eligible under the DSF including but not limited to:

- implementation of universal design for learning (UDL);
- salaries for those staff whose only duties involve supporting students with disability;
- purchase of ICT licenses in bulk (such as for inclusion support software for students with disability);
- lowering the high-cost-claims threshold to \$5,000 per student with disability (ensuring a larger reach of students).

This is in addition to the pre-existing eligible activities as follows:

- activities aimed at attracting and supporting students with disability to participate in higher education;
- educational support and equipment for students with disability;
- making modifications to course content, teaching materials and delivery methods to better meet the needs of students with disability; and
- training staff to support students with disability.

Some practical examples under the above listed eligible activities may be, but not limited to:

1. hiring of additional disability advisors who advise on reasonable adjustments and coordinate support services, including mentoring and coaching students, liaising with academic staff, teaching and coaching academic staff, and teaching how to use assistive technology etc;
 - professional development;

- resource development for university staff;
 - campus access;
2. drafting and/or revising Disability Action Plans (DAPs);
 - assistive technology specialists;
 3. staff employed to implement individual adjustments, e.g., accessible materials; and
 4. teaching and learning staff with specialist disability knowledge.

The increase in funding is backdated to the 2024 funding year. The department understands the likelihood of rollovers due to late notification of increased funding and will work with universities to reduce underspends over the next year.

The intent of annual reporting against a provider's DSF funding is to demonstrate accountability to the Minister for Education as assessed by the Department of Education. As a secondary outcome, the report (provided to the department) is intended to enhance sector performance insights and drive improvements to future policy and program delivery approaches.

The department will take great interest in analysing reported expenditures to consolidate and verify whether the overall increase in funds has had a pronounced effect on increasing student reach as well as statistical increases in student access, participation and completion.

Please note: additional support should not replace services that the university provides for all students, or that the university is required to provide to meet its minimum requirements under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (DSE). It may be used to provide supplementary support to implement adjustments or specialist services for students with disability, or to build the capacity of the university in inclusive practices, including universal design for learning to directly improve access, participation and success for students with disabilities.

This document is intended to provide general guidance only and is not intended as, and should not be relied on as, legal advice. Please read in conjunction to the [Higher Education Support \(Other Grants\) Guidelines 2022](#), which is the primary source of compliance. Higher education providers should seek their own legal advice to understand their obligations under Commonwealth legislation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Disability Action Plans (DAPs)

1. Can elements of DAPs be claimed under the DSF?

The quadrupled funding allows for salaries of new staff to work on disability related duties. Hence, an eligible cost involves the hiring of staff within your disability office to draft, review, enhance and implement improvements to a DAP.

2. In relation to the proposed legislative changes, if an institution already has a DAP in place, will this be acceptable or will there be additional specifications?

If a DAP is currently in place and reviewed regularly, this is acceptable to provide. The department suggests that DAPs are regularly reviewed, especially now where there may be scope within your funding allocation to hire staff who write, review and update DAPs, as part of

broader DSF activities. DAPs that are accessible, detailed and current provide a valuable resource to attract, retain and support students throughout university.

The department encourages DAPs to be lodged and published with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Further information on this process can be found here: [Register of Disability Action Plans | Australian Human Rights Commission](#).

Evidence of Students' Disabilities and Support Needs

3. Is evidence of disability and support needs required to support a student?

Yes, evidence of a student's disability and support needs is required to provide support. Universities acknowledge the barriers to obtaining documentation and will often accept evidence from various sources or offer temporary adjustment plans while students work toward a formal diagnosis or better documentation.

Universities are not required to rely specifically on diagnostic documentation. Rather, universities are expected to obtain sufficient evidence regarding the needs of individual students, and to be satisfied with providing adjustments based on an assessment of a student's needs. The university is to maintain records of the evidence obtained in verifying disability and support needs for the preceding 7-year period. Universities are required to publish a disability needs assessment procedure on their website which should outline the types of evidence required.

4. Does evidence have to be from a medical source?

Evidence of disability and support needs does not have to be from a medical source. The type of evidence needed will depend on the nature of a student's disability and the evidence should ensure support is consistent with the needs of a student. Universities are encouraged to revise and make the process for obtaining documentation as easy as possible.

5. What is the purpose of diagnostic documentation?

Diagnostic documentation identifies the functional impact of a disability to assist practitioners to provide appropriate adjustments and supports. Practitioners may use documentation alongside judgement to further increase support for adjustments. Practitioners have advised the department that some common reasons documentation is requested include:

- justification of high-cost claims when supports exceed \$5,000
- ensuring appropriate adjustments for degrees with inherent requirements such as a medical degree
- supporting students' adjustments to educators
- providing consistency amongst staff, i.e., two students with same disability but who have varying documentation ideally should be provided with consistent support
- concerns surrounding discrimination and legal claims.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

6. How effective is UDL?

The implementation of UDL is a contributing factor to attracting and enrolling students, but it is important to recognise that there is not always a linear progression to increased enrolments or disclosure from students with disability. Some providers have observed that the more UDL is incorporated, the less students are disclosing of their disability. It is important to continue to encourage students to disclose their disability to ensure an accurate enrolments-based allocation.

Staffing

7. If the disability office creates a new specialist role that works within other faculties, can this salary be claimed under the DSF?

The staff member must be substantively hired and employed by the disability office for the salary to be claimed under the DSF. However, they can complete short-term transfers or be seconded to other faculties to provide disability support training or activities.

For example, a UDL specialist may be hired to establish UDL in other faculties by educating tutors. The aim is to build staff capability so that UDL is maintained, eventually without the assistance from additional staff from the disability office. In essence, staff are anchored in the disability office but may be deployed to build capacity in other areas. Staff must always remain an employee of, and return to, the disability office.

Rollovers

8. Are rollovers guaranteed and can these figures be included within an institution's budget?

Yes, DSF rollover amounts from the 2024 academic year have already been rolled over into the 2025-year budget. Likewise, this will again occur in the 2026 academic year. If you have any questions about your rollover figures and allocations please reach out to the department.

Please note due to the increased funding, the department understands that providers are unlikely to spend their full allocation in the 2025 and 2026 academic years. The department anticipates it will take providers approximately 2-3 academic years to utilise the funds due to planning and hiring delays. If however, a provider does not appropriately use/commit their allocation within a reasonable time, the department and provider may come to an agreement that funds must be returned to the department.

Mission based compacts

9. Will disability be included in mission-based compacts?

Mission based compacts are intended to be up to four-year strategic agreements between the ATEC and Table A and B providers. Compacts will be one of the ATEC's key stewardship levers to drive a high performing and diverse higher education system.

Through compacts, it is proposed that providers will highlight how their unique missions and goals align with national priorities outlined in the ATEC's Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP). Priorities would be determined through consultation, with compact terms informed by the SSP

and reflecting a negotiated position between ATEC and providers. The ATEC would take a system-wide view when assessing how national priorities are being achieved across all compacts and can incentivise ambition towards priorities through its available levers.

Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) Disability Stocktake

10. Can the department share the ACSES stocktake findings?

A link to the ACSES Stocktake - Executive Summary will be shared once published by ACSES. ACSES is scheduled to present their findings to the sector in April 2026. Email invitations will be sent by the department.

Past Disability Support Fund (DSF) Reporting FAQs

If you are new to DSF reporting, you may wish to familiarise yourself with the DSP webpage which can be found here: [Higher Education Disability Support Program - Department of Education, Australian Government](#). We draw your particular attention to the previously issued FAQs which can be found [here](#). The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) also publish a wide range of resources available on their website: [ADCET - Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training](#).

We hope this document has been helpful to you. Should you have any further questions, please contact us at: disability@education.gov.au.