



2026 Disability Support Fund Amendments to the Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Executives Sessions: 22 and 29 June 2026

Disability Practitioners and Managers Sessions: 23 June, 30 June and 3 July 2026

In 2025, the Australian Government committed to providing further support to students with disability by quadrupling the Disability Support Fund (DSF) from \$13 million to \$53 million (indexed) per year. The underpinning intent of this funding increase is to provide additional support to universities to supplement the costs of delivering more programs and services to empower students with disability to access, participate and succeed in higher education.

The significant increase in funding needs to be supported by improved accountability and transparency to drive coordinated and sustainable improvements.

The Minister for Education updated the [Higher Education Support \(Other Grants\) Guidelines 2022](#) (the guidelines) to introduce improved accountability and transparency requirements for the DSF, including but not limited to the following:

1. a disability governance committee
2. a disability education inclusion strategy
3. a disability workforce inclusion strategy.

Previous FAQs can be accessed here:

- [2024 DSF Reporting FAQs](#)
- [2025 DSF Reporting FAQs](#).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Consistent with your institution's obligations under the [Privacy Act 1988](#), privacy principles must be adhered to throughout the establishment, operations and reporting conducted by the disability governance committee in support of students and staff with disability.

All materials provided to the disability governance committee which could disclose individuals' private information (e.g. disability status, individual disability accommodations, details derived from learning access plans, and other identifying information) must be de-identified.

2. This document is intended to provide general guidance only. It should not be relied on as legal advice. Please read in conjunction with the guidelines, which is the primary source of compliance for the DSF.

Disability Governance Committee

1. Can DSF funds be used to support the work of the disability governance committee?

Up to 10% of the enrolment-based grant in a year may be used for (paragraph [41\(2\)\(g\)](#)):

- training committee members in contemporary disability support practices, contemporary governance and institutional decision-making practices
- transportation costs for student members to attend meetings of the disability governance committee
- independent reviews of the disability governance committee and the disability education and workforce inclusion strategies.

2. What degree of oversight should the disability governance committee exercise over a university's use of DSF funding? Is this oversight exclusive or may other voices be considered?

The disability governance committee is responsible for overseeing and providing advice on the use of DSF funds (paragraph [37A\(1\)\(f\)](#)). The extent of the committee's oversight is to be established in the terms of reference (subparagraphs [37A\(1\)\(e\)\(ii\)-\(iii\)](#)).

As such, the committee's oversight is not exclusive. A university is free to consider advice from other sources where appropriate to do so, providing that the minimum requirements outlined in the guidelines are met.

The committee is not expected to direct the use of DSF funding.

3. Does a new disability governance committee need to be formed if one with a similar function already exists?

Not necessarily. An existing committee can be used if it meets all the new requirements. The committee must be a sub-committee of the university's principal governing body (paragraph [37A\(1\)\(d\)](#)).

4. How should the disability governance committee be resourced?

Universities must provide the information and resources needed for the disability governance committee to function effectively (paragraph [37A\(1\)\(g\)](#)), including any secretariat support.

5. How do universities recruit, support and train members?

Universities have flexibility in how they select members. A structured induction, skills matrix and ongoing training program are recommended.

Student participation is essential and can be supported through student training and student travel funding. The most current data shows that in 2024, 12.35% of Australia's student population reported having a disability. If a university faces challenges finding student members, it may consider looking at whether a student has listed any extra-curricular activities on their early offer application forms to find students with high advocacy skills or issuing internal callouts to student cohorts. Some universities also have disability networks which can help in finding student members through an "Expression of Interest" process. In all such instances, it is important to adhere to privacy principles.



6. Is the disability governance committee a representative body?

The disability governance committee has a defined role and members collectively need to have, or develop, the experiences and skills to contribute to its work. Many universities have disability networks which enable access to a broad range of perspectives. These relationships with networks are expected to continue and can help inform the committee's work.

7. Who can chair the disability governance committee?

The chair may be a senior leader, executive, Disability Champion, external member or another appropriate person. It is good practice for a direct connection to the principal governing body (e.g. the chair of the disability governance committee may be a member of the principal governing body).

Where a principal governing body requires all committees to be chaired by a member of the principal governing body and the principal governing body does not currently have a member with a disability, then a person with a disability may be selected to act as a co-chair or deputy chair of the disability governance committee. Under these circumstances, it is important for the terms of reference to capture the reasons for the addition of a co-chair or deputy chair, the methods used to select an appropriate individual for the position and a plan outlining the steps needed for the co-chair or deputy chair to assume the position of chair.

If a university does not employ any staff with a disability in senior positions, then a person with a disability in a more junior position may be selected as co-chair or deputy chair of the disability governance committee. This would allow that person to gain leadership opportunities and potentially assume a chair position without the need for a person with disability to co-chair in future. In this instance, the terms of reference should include similar elements to those described above.

8. How do universities demonstrate majority membership of people with disability?

The department will rely on advice and assurance from the Chair that membership requirements have been met. Chairs may choose to provide information about members' relevant experience and expertise, but the department will not require medical documentation.

9. Can members of disability peak bodies sit on the committee?

Individuals from disability peak bodies may sit on the disability governance committee, as external members, if they are not enrolled with the university, employed by the university, or otherwise engaged by the university in a paid or unpaid capacity (section [37A\(1\)\(a\)\(vi\)](#)).

Where a disability peak body is engaged by a university in a paid or unpaid capacity, and a representative of the peak body is selected as a member of the disability governance committee, then universities should adhere to their conflict-of-interest policies. The representative of the disability peak body in this situation, while providing valuable expertise, would not be considered an independent member for the purposes of the disability governance committee.

10. Will there be templates for terms of reference and reporting?

Existing governance templates and reporting processes should be followed and adapted where needed.



Disability education and workforce inclusion strategies

11. What is the purpose of the disability education and workforce inclusion strategies?

The strategies should outline the university's current position, priorities and planned improvements over a three-year period in:

- access to higher education for people with disability (subparagraph [37B\(1\)\(b\)\(i\)](#))
- supports for teaching staff in addressing the needs of students with disability (subparagraph [37B\(1\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#))
- the recruitment, professional development and promotion process for employees with disability (subparagraph [37C\(1\)\(b\)\(i\)](#))
- knowledge and skills in disability relevant practices for staff, governing bodies and executives (subparagraph [37C\(1\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#)).

The strategies can be 'living' documents that can be updated from year to year to ensure they remain current. These documents, in whichever form, must be published on the university's external website (subsections [37B\(3\)](#) and [37C\(3\)](#)).

12. Can consultants be hired to develop the strategies?

Yes, however it is important that the consultant has the relevant skillset and knowledge of the disability sector. Universities may wish to consider the consultant's role as more of a coordinator to ensure co-design and co-implementation with students and staff with lived experience (paragraphs [37B\(1\)\(a\)](#) and [37C\(1\)\(a\)](#)).

13. Do the strategies replace a Disability Action Plan (DAP)?

Where a university has a DAP, the guidelines do not require that the strategies replace a DAP.

Existing DAPs may continue and be expanded to meet the DSF requirements (i.e. by incorporating the requirements of the strategies), but the DAP must then be published consistent with subsections [37B\(3\)](#) and [37C\(3\)](#).

A DAP under Part 3 of the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) remains good practice, covering the full breadth of a university's operations, while the strategies focus on the use of DSF funding. A DAP can be a useful foundation document for developing the strategies.

14. Can universities use the strategies within existing plans or DAPs and extend them rather than developing new, separate strategies?

Yes, the new guidelines allow the strategies to be embedded in other existing documentation (subsections [37B\(4\)](#) and [37C\(4\)](#)). Existing strategies may be used if they already meet the updated requirements.

Relevant disability content can also be extracted from multiple documents and consolidated into a public statement, published on the university's website in place of a standalone new strategy (subsections [37B\(5\)](#) and [37C\(5\)](#)).

The strategies can be 'living' documents that can be updated from year to year to ensure they remain current. These documents, in whichever form, must be published on the university's external website (subsections [37B\(3\)](#) and [37C\(3\)](#)).

15. Can DSF-funded staff contribute to the strategies?

Yes, where their role aligns with DSF-funded activities and guideline requirements.



16. Should the strategies be strategic or operational?

They should provide a strategic framework supported by practical actions and measurable improvements.

Implementation

17. What are the timeframes for establishing a disability governance committee, disability education strategy and disability workforce strategy?

- 1 July 2026: Guideline changes come into effect
- July-Dec 2026: Universities establish the committee and draft the strategies
- 1 January 2027: Committee and strategies are in place

The first meetings of the disability governance committee meetings may be held before 1 January 2027 or between January and April 2027. Please ensure the department is aware of the committee's establishment and the date of its first meeting.

The frequency of committee meetings should be set out in the terms of reference.

18. What happens if requirements are not met?

If a university does not meet requirements, they may be ineligible for DSF funding. The department will work with universities to support compliance, but ongoing non-compliance may affect funding eligibility.

Activity eligibility

19. Can DSF funds be used on disability training materials and workshops?

DSF funding can support the development of disability-related training materials and guides, as well as external facilitators delivering training to staff who support students with disability (sections [41\(2\)\(d\), \(e\) and \(g\)](#)).

However, institution-wide staff training and associated delivery costs are considered core university responsibilities and must be funded from other sources.

Mandatory training delivered to all university teaching staff is a university responsibility as outlined in the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#).

20. Can DSF funds be used on neurodiversity training for all university teaching staff?

DSF funds may be used to develop training resources for students and staff with a disability, but broader staff training delivery must be funded separately. Training delivered to all university teaching staff is a university responsibility as outlined in the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (DSE) and the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#).

Universities are expected to improve disability capability through their education and workforce strategies.

21. Can DSF funds be used to subsidise pathways to ADHD diagnosis?

No, DSF funds cannot be used to fund a diagnosis.



Under the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (DSE) and the guidelines for the DSF, students or staff with disability are not required to provide a formal diagnosis or medical certificate to access DSF-supported services or to benefit from reasonable adjustments. Each university has their own processes in place to ensure appropriate expenditure of DSF funds and accuracy of reporting data. This may include a requirement imposed by the university for students to provide documentation outlining their disability. Universities are not expected to undertake diagnostic activities as part of their responsibilities.

22. Can DSF funds be used to provide personal or logistical support for staff experiencing difficulties accommodating the number of students and staff with disability?

Universities are responsible for using DSF funding consistent with the requirements in the guidelines. DSF funding is **supplementary** (section [36\(2\)](#)) and can only be used for the purposes set out in the guidelines.

Each university must ensure that its obligations under the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (DSE) are met even if DSF funds have been fully used.

Funding and program longevity

23. Are DSF funding arrangements likely to change?

There are currently no planned changes to the way indicative and final funding allocations are provided. However, future program reviews may consider the method for calculating funding.

24. Will the DSF continue in future years?

The DSF is an ongoing program. The [Portfolio Budget Statements](#) (on page 56) lists the current year budget and future forward estimates for the next three years. Any changes will be supported by consultation.

Reporting

25. Will reporting templates change?

Not for 2027. However, the reporting due date has been changed from 31 March to 1 May from 2027 onwards. This gives universities more time to meet the reporting requirements.

The reporting templates for 2028 onwards will be reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Universities will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the updated templates before they are finalised and distributed at the end of 2027.

Please contact disability@education.gov.au with any questions.

For individualised DSF advice, universities should seek their own legal advice to understand their specific obligations under relevant legislation.

