

**STUDENT SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE
(SSIN)**

Arrangements for students funded under the
Education (Student Support) Regulations

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE (DSA)

To: Student Finance administrators and practitioners in higher education providers;
DSA needs assessors; Student Finance advisors, and The Student Loans Company

**SSIN 06/26
August 2026**

**Updated Guidance on Calculation of Public Transport Contribution under
Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

Dear Colleagues,

This is a notification that DfE has prepared new guidance on the way in which the public transport contribution should be calculated for DSA purposes.

DSA travel support is calculated as the excess between public transport costs and the mode of travel the student is required to use because of their disability. DSA needs assessors are asked to calculate the cost that the student would incur if they travelled to their higher education provider by public transport. This amount is known as the public transport contribution and represents the cost that any student would face in undertaking that journey. DSA will then fund the difference between this cost and, for example, the cost of taxis if the student has to travel by taxi as a result of their disability.

There has previously been no detailed guidance on how to calculate the public transport contribution, which has led to inconsistencies in the approach by needs assessors. This is why DfE has prepared new guidance on how to calculate the public transport contribution. The new guidance is attached at Annex 1 to this SSIN and will be included in the DSA guidance chapter shortly.

The new guidance will apply to new travel recommendations from **17th August 2026**. Students who have already had DSA-funded travel support agreed by SLC will not have their public transport contribution re-assessed under the new guidance unless they apply for new journeys, in which case the public transport contribution for these journeys will be calculated under the new guidance.

If you have any queries, please contact the Disabled Students' Allowance Team at:
Disabled.STUDENTALLOWANCES@education.gov.uk.

Regards

Disabled Students' Allowance Team,
Department for Education,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
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Annex 1 – Updated Guidance on Calculation of Public Transport Contribution

1. The equivalent public transport contribution for a student's journey should be calculated as the cost for each journey that that student would incur if they travelled to their HEP by public transport.
2. It is not acceptable, for example, to take the cost of an annual season ticket for the journey and then divide it by 365 days and then in half to come up with a public transport contribution for a single taxi journey. This does not reflect the realistic cost that that student would incur if they took those journeys.
3. Where the public transport journey requires the student to take multiple forms of transport (e.g. a bus and a train), all of these should be included in the calculation. Where the distance on a leg of the journey is less than 3 miles (e.g. where a student would arrive at a railway station 2 miles from their HEP and could either walk or take the bus to the HEP), the cost of that leg need not be included in the calculation if the overall journey length would be under the 75-minute limit if the student walked. If the student would have to take public transport for that leg in order to complete the journey in under 75 minutes, then the cost of that should be included in the calculation. The cost of public transport should also be included in the calculation if there is no safe walking route available for that leg.
4. Reduced rate fares that can be obtained with a railcard (e.g. a 16-25 railcard or a Disabled Persons Railcard), or concessions for particular age groups (e.g. pensioner free bus passes) should not generally be used in the calculation, as these are not available to all students. However, where all students can access a reduced rate fare (for example, where all students at the HEP the DSA recipient attends can access a reduced rate bus fare), then the reduced rate can be included in the calculation.
5. Peak time fares should be used for the calculation by default. Only where there is clear evidence that all travel will be off-peak may an off-peak fare be used. If it is cheaper overall for a student to purchase a peak single for the journey to the HEP and an off-peak single for the journey home, or similar, this combination can be used for the calculation.
6. Some examples are provided below to illustrate appropriate calculations.

Student A

Student A lives in a town in Surrey and studies at a HEP in central London. The overall public transport journey time is less than 75 minutes and involves a train from her town to a station in London close to her HEP. Her academic year starts in September and runs until the following June. She needs to attend university 3 days a week for 30 weeks a year – 90 return journeys a year.

The cost of an annual season ticket for the train journey is £4,300 a year (£47.78 per return journey), the cost of a monthly season ticket is £415 a month (£46.11 per return journey, assuming the student does not need to make any journeys in July and August),

the cost of a weekly season ticket is £110 a week (£36.67 per return journey), and the cost of a daily return ticket is £28.

In this situation the realistic lowest cost that a student making these journeys by public transport would incur would be the daily return ticket, so this should be used in the public transport calculation. This would result in a public transport contribution of £14 per single taxi journey.

Student B

Student B lives in rural Yorkshire and studies at a HEP in a nearby city. The overall public transport journey involves a bus to a railway station, a train to the city, and then a tram or a walk of 1 mile to the HEP. The overall public transport journey time falls just within the 75-minutes if the student takes the bus from the station to the HEP, but outside it if the student walks. The cost of that bus journey therefore needs to be taken into account in the calculation of the public transport contribution.

His academic year starts in September and runs until the following June. He needs to attend university 5 days a week for 30 weeks a year – 150 return journeys a year.

The cost of a monthly season ticket for the bus journey from Student B's home to the railway station is £90 (£6 return each day, assuming the student does not need to make any journeys in July and August), the cost of a weekly season ticket is £24 (£4.80 return each day), and the cost of a daily ticket is £6 return each day. Annual tickets are not available.

The cost of the train journey is £1,265 a year for an annual season ticket (£8.43 per return journey), £121 for a monthly season ticket (£8.07 per return journey, assuming the student does not need to make any journeys in July and August), £32 for a weekly season ticket (£6.40 per return journey), and £7 for a daily return.

The cost of the tram journey from the railway station to the student's HEP is £60.90 for a 28-day ticket (£4.06 per return journey, assuming 10 are required to cover the academic year), £19 for a 7-day ticket (£3.80 per return journey), or £4 for a daily return ticket.

The total public transport contribution should be calculated as the realistic lowest cost that a student would incur for each part of the route. This would be £4.80 for the bus journey, £6.40 for the train journey, and £3.80 for the tram journey, totalling £15 for the return journey each day and thus £7.50 public transport contribution for each single taxi journey.

Student C

Student C lives in a town in Somerset and studies at a HEP in another town. Her academic year runs from January to November. She needs to attend university for 2 days a week for 40 weeks a year – 80 return journeys a year. The public transport journey time is less than 75 minutes and involves a bus with a short walk at each end.

The cost of the bus journey is £96 for a 28-day ticket (£12 per return journey, as based on her term dates 10 are required to cover the period during which she is attending the HEP), £26 for a 7-day ticket (£13 per return journey), and £6 for a daily return ticket.

In this situation the realistic lowest cost that a student making these journeys by public transport would incur would be the daily return ticket, so this should be used in the public transport calculation. This would result in a public transport contribution of £3 per single taxi journey.

Student D

Student D lives on the outskirts of a city and attends a HEP in the city centre. In the upcoming academic year, Student D will be attending the HEP for the first term (10 weeks), a placement in a nearby town for the second term (10 weeks), and a placement in a rural area for the third term (10 weeks).

Term 1: Student D needs to attend the HEP 4 days a week for the first term of 10 weeks – 40 return journeys in total. The public transport journey involves a train journey with a short walk at either end, and is less than 75 minutes. The cost of a monthly season ticket is £143 (£8.93 per return journey, assuming 16 return journeys a month), the cost of a weekly season ticket is £37 (£9.25 per return journey), and the cost of a daily return is £13. In this situation the most cost-effective public transport option is to purchase two monthly season tickets followed by two weekly season tickets, totalling £360. This is a cost of £9 per return journey, which would result in a public transport contribution of £4.50 per single taxi journey.

Term 2: Student D needs to attend a placement in a nearby town 5 days a week for 10 weeks during his second term – 50 return journeys in total. The public transport journey involves a bus with a short walk at either end, and is less than 75 minutes. The cost of a weekly ticket is £26 (£5.20 per return journey) and the cost of a daily return is £6 (no monthly tickets are available). In this situation the most cost-effective public transport option is to purchase 10 weekly tickets. This is a cost of £5.20 per return journey, which would result in a public transport contribution of £2.60 per single taxi journey.

Term 3: Student D needs to attend a placement in a rural area 5 days a week for 10 weeks during his third term – 50 return journeys in total. There is no public transport available for this route, which means that Student D can only be awarded DSA-funded taxis for this route if he is unable to drive as a result of his disability. Student D has said that he is unable to afford the cost of driving lessons and so cannot drive. However, as this is a reason that could apply to any student and is not disability-related, no DSA-funded taxis will be awarded for travel to and from this placement.