

Skills Development Accessibility Supports

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

EMPLOYMENT NOVA SCOTIA

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Introduction to Skills Development Accessibility Supports

Skills Development Accessibility Support (SDAS) provides financial assistance to students who have a permanent disability and are approved to participate in the Skills Development (SD) Program. Financial assistance under SDAS is intended to support the costs of equipment and/or services to help reduce or remove educational barriers¹ that are caused by the disability and are directly related to the delivery of the training program.

The process for individuals to apply for SDAS includes working with their Case Manager, a Student Accessibility Specialist at the training institution, and Employment Nova Scotia. These application guidelines contain important information about SDAS, including a summary of roles and responsibilities, eligibility, and how to apply.

SDAS Roles

SDAS roles are summarized below. For more detailed information about roles and responsibilities, refer to the SDAS Roles Overview.

Case Managers

- Support clients through the SDAS application process.
- Coordinate with and are the main point of contact for Student Accessibility Specialists at training institutions.
- Submit SDAS Application Packages to Employment Nova Scotia for assessment.

Student Accessibility Specialists

- Review documentation and assess students' needs.
- Develop and implement an Academic Accommodation Plan² to support students' learning. The academic accommodation plan will identify accommodations and include a rationale for each.
- Communicate with Case Managers when clarification about the academic accommodation plan is required.

Employment Nova Scotia

- Receive SDAS Application packages.
- Assess SDAS applications using the SDAS policy to ensure the client and costs are eligible under SDAS.
- Administer the SDAS funding according to SD Individual Agreement Terms and Conditions.

SD Accessibility Coordinator

- Assist Case Managers with early identification of disabilities and supports, transition planning for individuals considering training, and the SDAS application process.
- Connect Case Managers and clients to other regional, government and community-based disability supports, as required.

¹ Educational barriers include but are not limited to deficits with attention and focus; deficits with processing and auditory skills; deficits with executive functioning and meta-cognition; Deaf or hard of hearing; Blind or vision impaired; physical barriers; mental health issues; Autism spectrum disorder; traumatic brain injury.

² Academic Accommodation Plan includes the following: SDAS Supporting Items Form and, if applicable, NSCC Academic Accommodation Agreement. See [SDAS Application Package Requirements](#).

- Collaborate with Private Career Colleges to facilitate the development of an accommodation plan in situations where the institution does not have an individual designated to support students with disabilities.

Eligible Individuals

Individuals must meet all the following requirements to be eligible for SDAS:

- They are approved to participate in the Skills Development Program.
- They have a permanent disability as verified by a qualified assessing professional³.
- A Student Accessibility Specialist or another designated individual⁴ has identified a need for equipment and/or services to help reduce or remove educational barriers caused by the disability.

Only individuals who are approved to participate in the SD Program will be eligible for support under SDAS. However, individuals can apply for SDAS before their SD application is approved. For more information see [When to apply for SDAS](#).

Applying for SDAS

Before you begin

The process to apply for SDAS may vary from individual to individual, depending on the point at which their disability, or suspected disability, is identified and/or the timing and nature of their interactions with their Case Manager. The process to apply may be:

- Early intervention – meaning the individual is assessed for support prior to or at the start of the training program.
- In-progress intervention – meaning the individual is assessed for support at any point while their training program is in progress.

The emphasis is on early intervention, as this is the best way to ensure that supports are in place as soon as possible.

Is the individual eligible for SDAS?

1) Is the individual approved (or applying) to participate in the SD Program?

- If yes, continue.
- If no, the individual is not eligible for SDAS.

2) Does the individual have a permanent disability?

- If yes (or unknown), continue. Disability Verification Form must be completed. Disability assessment(s) may be required.

³ A qualified assessing professional includes (but may not be limited to): Family Doctor or specialist; Registered Psychologist; Audiologist; Occupational Therapist; Speech Pathology Therapist

⁴ The SD Accessibility Coordinator will collaborate with Private Career Colleges in situations where they do not have an individual designated to support students with disabilities, or they are unfamiliar with SDAS.

- If no, the individual is not eligible for SDAS.

3) Has a Student Accessibility Specialist (or another designated individual) identified a need for accommodations to help reduce or remove educational barriers caused by the disability?

- If yes, continue.
- If no, the individual is not eligible for SDAS.
 - If the individual has not been referred to the Student Accessibility Specialist yet, the Case Manager must make a referral to the Student Accessibility Specialist before proceeding with a SDAS Application.

If the answers to the above questions are 'yes', the Case Manager and the Student Accessibility Specialist will work with the individual to apply for SDAS.

When to apply for SDAS

Individuals can apply for SDAS at any time during their training program: At the time of their SD Program application, or after the SD Program application has been submitted and/or approved.

SDAS Applications should not be submitted within the last 4 weeks of the training program end date. After this:

- ENS will only accept a SDAS Application in exceptional circumstances.
- Case Manager must contact Employment Nova Scotia prior to submitting the SDAS Application Package.

How to apply for SDAS

SDAS Application Package Requirements

A complete SDAS Application Package must include all required application documents and, if applicable, other application documents described below.

Required application documents

- SDAS Disability Verification Form
 - Completed by – Qualified assessing professional
- SDAS Supporting Items Form
 - Completed by – Student Accessibility Specialist
- Application for Skills Development Accessibility Supports
 - Completed by – Client and Case Manager

Other application documents (required in some situations)

- Disability Assessment (e.g., psychoeducational assessment)
 - Completed by – Qualified assessing professional
 - May be required – if it is a supporting document to confirm a permanent disability (submit as an attachment to Disability Verification Form).

- Note – Individuals are not required to share the entire disability assessment to be eligible for SDAS. To apply for SDAS, information including the individual’s name, the assessing professional’s name/signature, recommended supports/strategies section and date completed is sufficient.
- NSCC Academic Accommodation Agreement
 - Completed by – Student Accessibility Specialist
 - Required – if indicated on the SDAS Supporting Items Form (NSCC only)
- Quotes
 - Completed by – Student Accessibility Specialist
 - Required – if indicated in the [Eligible Costs](#) descriptions.

Submit the SDAS Application Package to ENS

Case Managers submit SDAS Application Packages to Employment Nova Scotia via:

- LaMPSS – if SDAS Application Package is being submitted at the same time as the SD Program application (or when submitting multi-year documents).
- E-mail – if the SDAS Application Package is being submitted after the SD Program application has been submitted to Employment Nova Scotia.
 - Cape Breton: LMDA-CB-Programs@novascotia.ca
 - Halifax: LMDA-HRM-Programs@novascotia.ca
 - Northern Nova Scotia: LMDA-Nrth-Pgms@novascotia.ca
 - South Shore Valley: LMDA-SSV-Programs@novascotia.ca

SDAS application review and assessment

Upon receipt of a SDAS Application Package, Employment Nova Scotia will verify completeness and assess the application.

Employment Nova Scotia will notify the individual when a decision is rendered.

Employment Nova Scotia will contact the Case Manager:

- If clarification is required about the SDAS Application Package.
- To notify them when a decision has been made. The purpose of this contact is for ENS to notify the Case Manager about the client’s eligibility for support under SDAS only. ENS will not disclose funding details.

Accessibility Supports

Eligible Costs

SDAS may provide financial assistance to cover or contribute to the cost of the following equipment and/or services to help reduce or remove educational barriers that are caused by the disability and are directly related to the delivery of the training program

Employment Nova Scotia will determine eligible costs upon receiving a complete SDAS Application Package.

Equipment	Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer • Assistive Computer Software (e.g., Dragon Naturally Speaking, JAWS Screen reader) • Assistive Accessories (e.g., mouse or keyboard alternatives, digital recorder) • Alternative Format Learning Materials (e.g., Braille products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor • Note Taker • Learning Disability Assessment • Academic Coach • Specialized services (e.g., Attendant care for studies, readers, interpreters, specialized transportation)

Equipment

Note: ENS's Technology Measures provide financial assistance to SD applicants to purchase the technology equipment and services needed to participate in their training. For basic computer and/or accessories requests, refer to ENS's Technology Measures.

Computer

- Funding amount: Flat rate \$900
- Quotes are not required

Computer system is defined as a desk top computer, laptop computer, or tablet to be used with assistive software. Also included are the system warranty, virus software, printer, carrying case and other non-assistive computer accessories.

Financial assistance for assistive software and/or accessories is in addition to the flat rate for Computer.

Computer – Advanced Operating System

- Funding amount: 100% of the cost of an advanced operating system is eligible for funding in exceptional circumstances only.
- Two (2) quotes required.

In exceptional circumstances, computers with an advanced operating system may be eligible when required as a tool to address and overcome the individual's disability-related barriers.

Exceptional circumstances include:

- Assistive computer software and/or accessories required by the individual require an advanced operating system to operate.
- It is clearly demonstrated the individual requires the advanced operating system for exceptional reasons beyond that of assistive technology.

Assistive Computer Software

- Funding amount – 100% of the cost of Assistive Computer Software is eligible for funding.
- One (1) quote required

Examples of Assistive Computer Software include Dragon Naturally Speaking, JAWS Screen Reader.

Assistive Accessories

- Funding amount – 100% of the cost of Assistive Accessories is eligible for funding, except for noise cancelling headphones (refer to notes below).
- Two (2) quotes required

Examples of Assistive Accessories include mouse or keyboard alternatives, digital recorders.

Additional Considerations:

- When noise cancelling headphones are required:
 - Funding amount – Flat rate \$200
 - Quotes are not required.

Alternative Format Learning Materials

- Funding amount – 100% of the cost is eligible for funding.
- One (1) quote required.

Example of Alternative Format Learning Materials includes Braille products.

Services

Tutor

Financial assistance for a tutor is eligible under SDAS to support individuals who are experiencing difficulty in their training program due to their disability and need assistance to maintain a passing grade.

- Funding amount – Two (2) hours / week, per course. Maximum two (10) hours/week for all courses combined. Requests above these amounts will be assessed by ENS on a case-by-case basis.
- Quotes are not required.
- Supporting documentation – If tutor cost is above \$20/hour, the request must include a copy of the tutor's resume and credentials (e.g., diploma, certificate).

Note Taker

Financial assistance for a note taker is eligible under SDAS to support individuals who are experiencing difficulty in their training program due to their disability and need assistance to maintain a passing grade.

- Funding amount: 100% of the cost is eligible for funding if approved.
- Quotes are not required.
- Supporting documentation – Request must include the course name and the number of weeks the service is required for each course requiring a note taker.

Additional Considerations:

- Financial assistance for a note taker may not be eligible under SDAS where assistive accessories related to note takers have also been approved for the individual.

Learning Disability Assessment

Financial assistance for a learning disability assessment (e.g., Psychoeducational assessment) may be eligible under SDAS when there are indicators that the individual may encounter academic challenges (e.g., they have in the past or they experience learning challenges during their training program and a disability is suspected). Typically, the Student Accessibility Specialist will assess an individual's case prior to making a referral for a learning disability assessment.

- Funding amount – 100% of the cost is eligible for funding (maximum \$2,300).
- Quotes are not required.

Academic Coach

On occasion, financial assistance for an Academic Coach may be eligible under SDAS in situations where the individual requires additional support from a third-party provider that cannot be provided by the Student Accessibility Specialist (or other designated individual at the training institution). It is expected that the support of an Academic Coach would be addressing a specific finding or result that is of considerable significance and consequence that has been verified through completion of the Disability Verification Form. Supporting documentation is required.

- Funding amount – To be determined by ENS on a case-by-case basis. Client contribution may be required.
- Quotes are not required.
- Supporting Documentation – Requests for an Academic Coach must include the following:
 - A copy of the Academic Coach's resume and qualifications (e.g., diploma, certificate)
 - A detailed proposal, customized to the individual
 - An outline of the support(s) required
 - A detailed rationale from the Student Accessibility Specialist about why the individual needs the customized, in-depth support.

Specialized Services

- Funding amount – To be determined by ENS on a case-by-case basis.
- Quotes may be required, upon request of ENS.

Examples of specialized services include attendant care for studies, readers, interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing, specialized transportation. The specialized service must be directly related to overcoming educational barriers caused by a disability.

Ineligible Costs

SDAS cannot be used to cover or contribute to the following costs:

- Tuition, books or any other items that are considered general requirements for the program.
- Costs that are not related specifically to attending post-secondary training.
- Daily living equipment and services (e.g., glasses, hearing aids, watches, physiotherapy, etc.).
- Equipment or services purchased before applying for SDAS.
- Equipment or services supported through ENS's Technology Measures.
- Items or services that are available at no cost through the training institution (e.g., Microsoft Office).

Contact Information

Employment Nova Scotia
Skills and Learning Branch
Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
1-877-223-0888

<http://www.novascotia.ca/employmentnovascotia/programs/skills-development.asp>