



Skills Development Accessibility Supports

Go-To Guide 2025

TEAM Work Cooperative

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PART 1: SDAS PURPOSE & ASSISTANCE

Guide Objective

The purpose of this document is to help navigate the Skills Development Accessibility Supports (SDAS) program in Nova Scotia. This guide is for Nova Scotia Works’ staff members and staff of other employment-related organizations across the province. It highlights the SDAS application process, key concepts and other resources.

What is SDAS?

Skills Development Accessibility Supports is a program available to help students experiencing permanent disability to overcome barriers that affect their academic achievement. It is available to students participating in Adult Learning Programs and/or post-secondary schooling that are funded through Employment Nova Scotia's Skills Development (SD) program.

SDAS offers financial support to cover the combined costs (when allowable and reasonable) of equipment and/or services that are required to overcome educational barriers caused by a disability.

Every SDAS application will be different, so we recommend that case managers contact an educational institution's learning strategist(s) or academic advisor as well as TEAM Work Cooperative's SDAS Coordinator, while also doing their own research.

SDAS Assistance

SDAS Information Session: an online webinar presented by TEAM Work Cooperative's SDAS Coordinator that is available every quarter and by request.

SDAS Go-To Guide: a semi-annual publication that aids the SDAS application process. This guide is available upon request through by TEAM Work Cooperative's SDAS Coordinator.

SDAS Newsletter: Published three times per year. The newsletter supports the Skills Development Accessibility Supports application process, advocates for post-secondary students with disabilities, and shares information and experiences about disability.

Direct Assistance:

Skills Development Accessibility Coordinator

TEAM Work Cooperative

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PART 2: SDAS ROLES OVERVIEW

Case Managers:

- Support clients through the SDAS application process. Contact SDAS Coordinator early in application process.
- Assist in the early identification of client disabilities by helping clients pursue documentation from qualified professional to confirm suspected disability.
- Help coordinator external assessments alongside SDAS Coordinator.
- Make referrals, and receive referrals from, SAS at NSCC or other training institutions and coordinate with SAS during application process.
- Sign privacy release on behalf of student to speak with SAS' at training institutions.
- Receive accessibility recommendations and academic accommodation plans from SAS.
- Notify the SAS when ENS has rendered a decision on a SDAS application.
- Submit SDAS applications to ENS:
 - Work with clients to complete the SDAS application.
 - Send complete SDAS application packages to ENS through LAMPSs or email.
- Act as the main point of contact for SAS and ENS.
 - If they require clarification about a student's situation for the purposes of ensuring the right SDAS supports are in place.
 - If they require clarification to process an SDAS application.

Student Accessibility Specialists:

- Accept referrals of students who disclose their disabilities to the learning institution.
- Collect information related to the disability and recommended support based on the selected program. Follow up with students.
- Provide space for the student to make requests for accommodations through the learning institution and tell their story.
- Develop an accommodation plan in collaboration with the student and sometimes faculty.
- Reach out to SDAS Coordinator and/or ENS with questions and concerns.
- NSCC requires privacy releases for CMs to speak with SAS regarding a student.

Program Officers – ENS:

- Receive and assess SD and SDAS application packages.
- Notify clients and Case Managers when a decision has been rendered for SD and SDAS.
- Administer SD and SDAS funding.
- Secure student's agreement for SD and SDAS funding through signed documentation.
- Please Note: it is not ENS' role to identify or recommend accommodations under SDAS.

Skills Development Accessibility Coordinator:

- Help CMs plan for individuals considering training (this may mean helping with the development of RTWAPs and academic planning).
- Assist CMs with early identification of supports that may be helpful beyond what is recommended through SAS and training institutions.
- Support CMs with SDAS questions and/or submitting SDAS application.
- Connect CMs and clients to other regional, government and community based disability supports and resources, as needed.
- Work with Private Career Colleges to develop an accommodation plan in cases where the institution does not have a dedicated SAS to assist students with disabilities.
- Provide disability education for Nova Scotia Works Centres.

- Advocate for Universal Design within Nova Scotia Works and Learning Institutions.

PART 3: KEY CONCEPTS & TERMS

Adult Mental Health and/or Cognitive Assessments: assessments used to identify an adult's cognitive processing and/or mental health challenges. It provides recommendations such as mental health treatments and other supports for adults in the home and in the community. These tests can identify and confirm conditions relating to mood, anxiety, substance use, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, executive function challenges, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, maladaptive personality patterns, and other psychological challenges.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Assessments: an assessment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) typically involves the comprehensive evaluation of information gathered from a number of sources, including parents/carers, family, teachers, partners and colleagues, and depends on the patient's age.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Assessments: an assessment used to evaluate for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It uses behavioral checklists, standardized assessment measures, and consultation/collaboration between professionals, families, and educators, to ensure the most effective assessment process. Recommendations are made for supports in the home, school, workplace, and in day-to-day life.

Barrier: anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation (Accessible Canada Act., 2019, c. 10).

Career Counselling: a confidential and collaborative process in which clients work with a career counsellor who assists them in their educational and career decision-making.

Disability: a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation that hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature (Accessible Canada Act., 2019, c. 10).

Early Intervention Assessments: Case managers should be proactive in the use of assessment tools, psychoeducational and functional assessments, and in learning about any prior assessments their client might have had done previously.

Neuropsychological Assessments: an assessment used to assist in evaluating how changes in the brain affect what an individual can do. Neuropsychological assessments may involve assessing strengths and challenges in areas such as attention, thinking, learning and memory, language, and executive functioning. This test may be appropriate for an individual who has an acquired brain injury (e.g., traumatic brain injury/concussion, stroke, brain tumour), a neurodevelopmental disability (e.g., cerebral palsy, spina bifida), or psychological conditions (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression).

Permanent and Persistent Disability: a “permanent disability” is an impairment or functional limitation that prevents a person from participating in substantially gainful employment and will remain with said person for life.

Due to the episodic nature of some disabilities, clinicians and professionals may be hesitant to describe the experience as permanent. Therefore, there is value in using the term “persistent disability” to recognize those experiences of disability that are long term, recurrent, and episodic in nature when it’s difficult to determine permanency.

The recognition of a persistent disability is particularly relevant for a mental health challenge where there may be variation in a person’s experience of disability over a lifetime.

School-Related or Psychoeducational Assessment: an assessment used to identify an individual's strengths and challenges concerning learning and behavior in educational settings. It provides recommendations for support in the classroom and at home. Depending on the age, issues such as ADHD, learning disabilities, giftedness, and school readiness may be identified and/or confirmed.

The Delta Screener: a tool to identify adults who may have a learning disability and to investigate their needs for support strategies and accommodations. It provides the career counselor with a checklist of risk factors and is a questionnaire that allows the practitioner to learn about the client’s experiences and background. It can be used to help identify if a psychological educational assessment or other diagnostic assessment should be completed for the client or not.

Universal Design for Learning: a teaching approach that aims to create inclusive learning environments by providing multiple ways for students to access information, engage with content, and demonstrate their understanding, catering to diverse learning styles and abilities, ensuring all learners can participate and succeed.

PART 3: APPLICATION PROCESS

Non-repayable funding assistance is available to help students who have a permanent disability overcome their disability-related barriers that affect academic achievement while participating in Adult Learning Programs or post-secondary training. This assistance is available for people currently funded through Employment Nova Scotia’s (ENS) Skills Development program.

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

Types of Support

SDAS may fully or partially cover costs related to the following assistive equipment and services:

- Computer
- Computer Assistive Computer Software (e.g. Dragon Naturally Speaking, JAWS Screen Reader)
- Assistive Accessories (e.g. mouse or keyboard alternatives, digital recorder)
- Alternate Format Learning Materials (e.g. Braille products)
- Tutoring
- Note Taker

- Learning Disability Assessment
- Learning Strategists
- Academic Coaches
- Specialized Services (e.g. attendant care for studies, readers, interpreters, specialized transportation)

SDAS Cannot Be Used to Cover

- Tuition, books or any other items that are considered general requirements for the program (e.g. safety equipment, computers required by program but not as tool to overcome a barrier related to a disability)
- 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 you submit your application to ENS
- Items or services available to students at no cost through school (e.g. Microsoft Office, Premier Tools)

Who Can Apply?

Individuals who meet all the following criteria are eligible for disability support funding:

- Currently funded through Skills Development program to attend a program
- Person with a permanent disability and has identified barriers/limitations that restrict the client's ability to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in their studies
- In need of equipment and/or services that directly relate to overcoming educational barriers caused by disability that may impact successful completion of academic training program

Only individuals who are approved to participate in the Skills Development program will be eligible for support under SDAS. However, individuals can apply for SDAS before their SD application is approved.

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.

When Can Student Apply?

An application can be submitted at any time during the program of study. However, equipment or services purchased before you submit your application to Employment Nova Scotia (ENS) will not be eligible for funding.

Case Managers will work with clients to apply for supports. Application packages received within **four-weeks prior** to the end of the program of study will not be assessed or processed by ENS – unless in exceptional circumstances (an NSW Case Manager will discuss exceptional circumstances with ENS prior to submitting).

Important Information for Applicants

If applicants purchase equipment after submitting their application to Employment Nova Scotia (ENS) and prior to receiving approval from ENS, they do so at their own risk. If an application is not approved, the applicant will incur the full cost themselves with no reimbursement by ENS.

If you are approved for SDAS to purchase assistive equipment or services, funding will be paid through your Skills Development Agreement. You may be required to sign an updated ENS agreement. Receipts are required from clients to show proof of purchase and/or payment. Receipts for assistive equipment must be submitted to ENS as soon as possible and no later than ten (10) calendar days after the funds have been paid to you.

If you are unable to provide receipts confirming that the assistive equipment or services were purchased, you will need to repay ENS in full. If this happens, it may affect your ability to access additional funding under this program in the future. If the receipts you provide for the items purchased total less than the funds that were paid to you, you will be required to repay ENS for the unspent amount.

How to Apply to SDAS

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

Required Forms:

- SDAS Application Form
- SDAS Disability Verification Form (Needs to be completed by doctor or professional)
- Equipment & Services Receipt Form
- Supporting Items Form (NSCC Only)
- Academic Accommodation Agreement (NSCC Only)

Other Application Documents (required in some situations)

- Disability Assessment (e.g., psychoeducational assessment):
 - Completed by a qualified assessing professional
 - May be required if it is a supporting document to confirm a permanent disability
 - Can be submitted as an attachment to Disability Verification Form
 - 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 a Student Accessibility Specialist
 - Required – if indicated on the SDAS Supporting Items Form (NSCC only)
- Quotes:
 - Completed by a Student Accessibility Specialist
 - Required if indicated in the Eligible Costs descriptions

Submitting 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