

SLC statement in response to CMA statement of 29 January 2021

News story

SLC welcomes the CMA's actions following allegations that some DSA suppliers have colluded over the price of key services and equipment.



The Student Loans Company welcomes the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) action in sending advisory letters to a number of businesses involved in the supply of goods and services funded by Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs), on the basis of allegations that some suppliers colluded over the price of key services and equipment.

The concerns expressed by the CMA further reinforce the importance of the work we have underway to reform the provision of DSA to both enhance the customer experience and improve value for money for the taxpayer. The Department for Education (DfE) and SLC have already embarked on a programme of significant reforms, designed to transform the customer experience, improve the provision of DSA and to make the overall processes more efficient. These reforms will also increase transparency of pricing and increase competition thus limiting the potential for any anti-competitive behaviour. SLC has already procured an e-quotation system, which will allow more suppliers to quote for work and will increase transparency of pricing and competition.

SLC is also finalising the design of a new procurement to centrally contract the supply of certain goods and services funded by DSA, which aims to both improve the customer experience for students in receipt of DSA and, in introducing robust contractual arrangements, deliver greater value for money for the taxpayer.

SLC takes these allegations of anti-competitive behaviour within the DSA supplier base extremely seriously, as the extensive nature of our reforms demonstrate.

Background

SLC administers the DSA grant scheme on behalf of the UK Government's Department for Education (DfE) and the Welsh Government's Higher Education Division. The scheme aims to ensure that all students study on a level playing field by covering some of the extra costs students may have because of a disability.

DSAs provide funding for specialist support such as equipment, software, training, non-medical help (e.g. tutoring, mentoring or note taking), travel and other costs of studying related to the students' condition.

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