

Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) – programme principles and criteria

Background

The Diploma in Sporting Excellence (“DiSE”) replaced the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) programme in 2018. It is a two-year, Department for Education (DfE) funded programme. It is a unique sporting qualification designed to meet the needs of student athletes who exhibit the potential to achieve excellence in their sport.

The DiSE is a two year education programme which is delivered alongside a conventional state funded study programme* of education or training for students aged 16 – 18 years and those students aged 19 – 24 years who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

The main focus of the programme is to support those young athletes, some of whom might otherwise have dropped out of education, identified and recruited into formal performance development programmes.

It seeks to deliver a complementary programme, allowing students to combine sport and education, so that they have the skills, knowledge and qualifications to pursue a dual career in high level sport alongside separate paid employment in the future.

It delivers a recognised programme of education, regulated by Ofqual, and seeks to enable athletes to acquire the skills and knowledge to gain an additional qualification in sporting excellence. DiSE operates to a capped number of 1,550 (entrant) participants per academic year.

DiSE student athletes should have already been recruited to join a structured talent/performance pathway, overseen by the National Governing Body (“NGB”) of their sport. Accordingly, NGB’s apply for places on the scheme, award those places to athletes and determine the delivery model, normally by appointing a college partner to support them.

The DfE provide annual funding for the DiSE programme of up to **£8,115,800** (Eight Million One hundred and fifteen thousand, eight hundred Pounds) supporting a two-year programme (each ‘intake’ comprising of up to 1,550 athletes), funded at £2,618 per student athlete for a full-year programme.

Example of DiSE programme funding model available in appendices.

Sport England and the Diploma in Sporting Excellence

Sport England is responsible to the DfE and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for providing the strategic direction to ensure the alignment of the DiSE programme with: The Sport England Talent Plan, individual NGB talent strategies, and wider Government, sporting and education priorities.

Sport England is also currently responsible for the administration of the annual submission process which determines which sports receive places on the DiSE programme and how many places they receive.

Sport England is empowered to make recommendations to the DfE regarding the optimal allocation of places. The DfE has final responsibility for approving the allocation of places to individual sports.

Recently, all bar one of the sports participating in the DiSE programme also receive investment from Sport England to support the provision of a progressive and inclusive talent/performance pathway designed to develop the competencies required to achieve high performance success.

The DiSE programme is amongst a few examples where some, but not all, athletes are eligible for additional support supplementary to the 'core' NGB talent pathway provision. Other examples include the SportsAid grant/support programme, Backing The Best and TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) each of which provide additional targeted support based on an athlete's circumstances, capabilities or level within the pathway.

To be eligible to receive DiSE support athletes must be on a formal NGB pathway, but the reverse is not the case. i.e. Given the constraint of the DiSE programme (a cap of 1,550 and specific targeted athlete eligibility criteria), it is unlikely that DiSE is able to support all athletes within, or at, a given tier of the pathway.

Sport England seek to work in collaboration with NGBs and other system partners to ensure an approach whereby complementary programmes are positioned and delivered in such a way to optimally support the athletes, individual NGB pathways and the England talent system as a whole.

We encourage NGB's to position DiSE as a time limited programme for a sub-cohort of young athletes at a specific stage within a more expansive sports talent pathway.

Aims of the DiSE programme

To support young athletes in the talent system to combine sport and education so that they have the skills, knowledge and competence to pursue sporting excellence alongside developing the skills and qualifications for a post athletic career. DiSE provides a comprehensive syllabus to support young athletes to gain an additional qualification and achieve their full potential within the NGB talent pathway as well as their future career.

NGB Eligibility

In order to be eligible to receive places for the DiSE programme, applicant NGB's shall normally:

- Be compliant with the [code for sports governance](#).
- Be an NGB, recognised by Sport England and a recipient of Sport England talent funding.
- Have a well-structured and progressive talent/performance pathway.

Student athlete eligibility

Once allocated places, NGBs can only select learners/athletes who meet the Department for Education student eligibility criteria below. NGB's should outline in their application how they will ensure that this is managed accordingly through their implementation of the scheme.

1. To be eligible for DiSE programme funding, a student must meet the following criteria:
 - a. Be aged 16 to 18 (or aged 19 to 24 if they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan), when they start the programme.
 - b. Subject to paragraph 2 below, be enrolled on a state funded study programme and be studying towards an academic (e.g. A levels) or technical qualification (e.g. NVQs or City and Guilds).
 - c. Be on a talent pathway managed by their sport's National Governing Body (NGB).
 - d. Must not be employed by their sport body or club on a professional contract.
2. The requirement in paragraph 1b. "be enrolled on a state funded study programme", does not apply to students who attend a fee-paying school for their main study programme in the following circumstances:
 - a. The student is in receipt of the school's means-tested bursary of at least 50% fee remission; or

- b. The student is in receipt of a talent / ability-based scholarship of at least 50% but were this not to be the case then they would have otherwise qualified for the school's means-tested bursary of at least 50% fee remission; or
 - c. At least 50% of the student's fees are being paid by a third sector organisation but were this not to be the case then they would have otherwise qualified for the school's means-tested bursary of at least 50% fee remission.
 - d. With regard to students eligible under paragraph 2 a., 2 b. or 2c., the relevant NGB should take all reasonable steps to confirm a student's eligibility with the student's fee-paying school before the student is enrolled on or starts the DiSE programme. The NGB should retain the relevant documentation for audit purposes.
3. DfE will consider other exceptional circumstances. Where an NGB believes that a student, who would otherwise be ineligible, should be considered for DiSE programme funding for exceptional reasons, it must contact DfE to seek agreement before the student is awarded a place.

Application Process

Recognised National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) seeking to engage with the programme should submit an annual application to participate in the DiSE programme, complying with the timescales and process set by Sport England.

As part of their submission NGBs should articulate their preferred number of places, and a clear and coherent rationale for that number bearing in mind the constraints upon the programme, the number of sports seeking places and the demand for places.

Applications should be submitted in February of each year, for the academic year commencing the following September. Applications will be assessed on merit, initially individually, and then collectively comparing the relative merits of each request versus the rest of the portfolio.

In doing so Sport England will apply the criteria, taking into account the financial and operational constraints of the programme, in order to determine those sports which will be included in the programme and the number of places which will be offered to each NGB.

Approval of recommendations and final decisions will be made by the Department for Education.

Submission

Sport England will supply a submission template. Whilst NGB's are not obliged to use the template, if an NGB is seeking to be allocated places then a formal submission should be submitted. NGB submissions are required to:

- Outline the number of places being requested and the rationale supporting that specific request. Supporting information should be provided including previous number of places requested and received. The number of completions/graduation rates in both the educational and sporting context for preceding years is also required. This will be used to assess whether the request is reasonable and realistic, and the likelihood of the request being utilised to full capacity.
- Clearly demonstrate how DiSE and the DiSE curriculum fits within the NGB's England/UK Talent Pathway (ETP): at what level of the pathway the DiSE programme is targeted and how it will complement the NGB's overall approach to athlete development.
- Provide details of the NGB's proposed education or training provider(s) and the format for delivery of the DiSE curriculum, associated workshops and the accompanying sport specific training.
- Outline the planned leadership and performance management approach/role of the NGB and the partnership with education providers on areas such as:
 - athlete/player recruitment to DiSE
 - delivery of the programme;
 - monitoring of progress;
 - athlete/player/learner support.
- Articulate a demonstrative track record of DiSE athletes progressing within the sport.
- Provide evidence that the DiSE athletes proposed have the potential to progress within the talent pathway and achieve success.
- Explain how the success of the athletes and the programme itself will be measured and monitored.
- Describe any current or planned initiatives either within DiSE or more broadly, that will support inclusion within the talent pathway.

Assessment Criteria

The applications will be independently assessed, and the output of the assessment process will be presented to the recommendations panel to inform their recommendations. The assessment criteria which applications will be assessed against are:

1. Number of places requested:

- i. *Appropriateness of the number of places requested by the NGB in the context of:*
 - *The number of athletes in the pathway as a whole and where appropriate, at the stage of the pathway that DiSE is aimed at.*
 - *The number of places offered and filled in previous years.*
 - *The proportion/number of young people completing/graduating from the DiSE programme (education and sporting).*

2. Congruence with the NGB talent pathway:

- i. *Alignment of proposed approach with Sport England's strategic objectives of creating pathways and programmes which are progressive, inclusive and provide a meaningful development experience.*
- ii. *The unique and value adding contribution of the DiSE programme to the NGB pathway and the athlete beneficiaries themselves.*
- iii. *Clarity & quality of DiSE integration with NGB pathway.*
- iv. *Evidence of the impact of DiSE on athlete development.*

3. Delivery and Engagement:

- i. *Recruitment strategy alignment with the aims of the DiSE programme.*
- ii. *NGB role in delivery of DiSE programme.*
- iii. *Management of partnership with DiSE provider.*
- iv. *Delivery plan/calendar.*

4. Selection and Progress:

- i. *Selection standards.*
- ii. *Progress measurement.*

5. Strategic Importance, scale, and reach:

- i. *Relative strategic importance as defined by significance in underpinning aspirations of the talent pathway for athletes and teams to progress and achieve.*
- ii. *The scale reach and diversity of the participation base and the talent pathway.*

6. Track Record.

Decision Making

A recommendations panel will be convened with the authority to make recommendations. The panel will exercise their discretion, considering the information submitted, the assessment process output and other pertinent information supplied to or held by Sport England, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Education (regarding track record).

In doing so, they will strive to make recommendations which in their view, best achieve the strategic objectives of Sport England, DfE and the DCMS as well as the programme objectives outlined within this paper.

The recommendations panel will be (as a minimum) comprised of the following members, or their appointed representatives:

- A representative of the Sport England Talent team;
- A representative of the Sport England investment team;
- A representative of TASS.

These recommendations will be presented to the Department for Education, who will make the final decisions in accordance with their policies.

Appeals

Appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the DiSE Appeals process available, on request, from Sport England.

An appeal may only be made on the following grounds:

1. the relevant selection criteria, as set out above, have not been properly applied, or
2. the relevant selection process, as set out above, has not been correctly followed.

Appendix 1

DiSE programme model example (note per student funding was increased from £2,500 to £2,618 for academic year 2020/21) – i.e. funding is illustrative for simplicity:

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Annual Total	Modelled funding
2019/20 Academic year	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2018/19 intake	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2019/20 intake	Up to 3,100 athletes	Up to 3,100 x £2,618 = £8,115,800
2020/21 Academic year	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2019/20 intake	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2020/21 intake	Up to 3,100 athletes	Up to 3,100 x £2,618 = £8,115,800
2021/22 Academic Year	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2020/21 intake	Up to 1,550 athletes from 2021/22 intake	Up to 3,100 athletes	Up to 3,100 x £2,618 = £8,115,800