

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Helping you study in
higher education



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In my role as Minister of State for Higher Education I have been lucky enough to be able to fulfil a personal desire to see that everyone with the ambition and ability to succeed in higher education has the opportunity to do so.

I am quite certain that my own experience of university has opened up a world of opportunities to me. That's why reducing barriers to higher education, be they perceived or real, continues to be both a personal and a professional passion.

Having the right information about the student support on offer at the right time is important to ensure you have access to the tailored support you may need to help you fulfil your own life ambitions.

It is for this reason that I have asked our partners with expertise in assisting students through the application process for disabled students allowances (DSAs) to produce this booklet.

This short guide provides a clear overview of the application process for DSAs, and directs you to information about the financial help and the support available to you so you can get the very best from your studies.

I wish you every success for the future and hope this guide helps you to make the most of your time at university or college.

Rt Hon. David Lammy, MP
Minister of State for Higher Education



Disabled Students' Allowances

02

Helping you study in higher education

There may be extra help for you if you have a disability, ongoing health condition, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, and want to study a higher education course.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are available to students living in England studying recognised full-time, part-time, undergraduate, postgraduate, and distance learning courses. If you do not live in England, go to page 9 for more information. There are separate arrangements for students who get funding from the NHS or a Research Council - see page 8 for more information. More details about who qualifies for DSAs are available at www.direct.gov.uk/dsas

DSAs help pay for additional support to help you make the most of your studies. DSAs do not depend on your income or the income of your family, they are paid according to need and do not have to be repaid. DSAs do not assist with the costs of support you need in your everyday life, only the extra costs you may have to pay because of your disability or condition when studying your course. DSAs do not affect other benefits you claim.

Support tailored around you

DSAs are unique to you and your needs.

They provide funding for you to get your individual support requirements assessed, and once this is done, they may cover costs associated with recommended equipment, one-to-one support, some travel, and other relevant support.

As part of the process you will be given the opportunity to meet with a professional 'needs assessor' whose aim is to help you get the best from your studies. You can discuss your needs in full in an informal and confidential environment. The assessor will consider your needs and the course you are studying and together you will come up with a package of support that is effective for you.

Applying for DSAs

03

When to apply

If you think you qualify for DSAs – apply now! www.direct.gov.uk/dsas

- Don't wait to be accepted on your course or until you've made an application for the main student finance package
- Whether you are applying for DSAs only or for both student support and DSAs apply early to avoid delays

If for any reason you change your mind about going to university you can cancel your application – but be sure to do this in writing.

If you don't get the chance to apply before your studies begin, you can apply for DSAs at any time during your studies, but the earlier you make the application, the sooner you'll receive the extra assistance you require.

For students who are studying with the Open University please contact them direct on: DSA-Queries@open.ac.uk
They can answer any question you may have and supply the appropriate application form.

Who will help you with your application

Most universities employ Disability Advisers who will give you confidential advice about DSAs and about the university and its services.

They can meet you before you start your course, even while you are still considering your options. Contact details for Disability Advisers will be on your university's website.



Applying for DSAs: who does what?

The process of applying for DSAs is straightforward.

However, a number of different people are involved and it is important that you understand what is expected of you and the other people in this process and where to go if you need more help:-

You should:

- make an application as early as possible
- ensure you provide all the required evidence
- ask for help as often as you need to
- arrange and attend your needs assessment appointment promptly
- answer all letters and phone calls quickly
- consider giving consent for a friend, relative, or adviser to help you, if required

Your university or college will:

- help to guide you through the process of applying for DSAs, if required
- offer help for the duration of your studies



Your needs assessor will:

- listen to what you say about your needs
- be an experienced professional
- recommend a package of support tailored around your needs
- provide you with a detailed report with recommendations for equipment and other support for your chosen course

If you started your studies in September 2009 or later you need to apply to Student Finance England (SFE). Otherwise apply to your Local Authority (LA). If you are an Open University (OU) student, apply direct to the OU.

SFE, LA or OU will:

decide if you qualify for DSAs; and if you do, will provide the funding for a needs assessment and for the recommended equipment and support.



How to apply for your DSA:

1.

Download a DSA1 form from www.direct.gov.uk/dsas
Complete and return the form to SFE or your LA (as appropriate) with the required evidence for each condition you wish to be considered for. OU students should apply to the OU's DSA office DSA-Queries@open.ac.uk

The evidence you need will depend on the nature of your condition. For example, if you are dyslexic, it may be an educational psychologist's report. If you have an ongoing health condition such as epilepsy, it may be a letter from your specialist. Keep a copy of any evidence you send.

2.

On receipt of your application form they will write to you confirming if you qualify for DSAs.

If they need more information they will write to you and ask you to provide it.

If you do not qualify for DSAs, they will tell you the reason why.

3.

SFE/LA will tell you to arrange a needs assessment. You can do this by contacting an Assessment Centre. SFE/LA will send you details of approved Assessment Centres.

The Open University will refer you to an Assessment Centre who will then contact you to arrange an appointment. OU students can request a home assessment if required.

Make sure you make an appointment for a time and place that suits you.

Make sure you attend – if you don't your application will be delayed and your university may not be able to put all the additional support you need in place for you.

4.

Attend your needs assessment.

Don't worry about discussing your issues or concerns with the assessor – it is confidential. You can take someone with you if you want to.

5.

You will be sent a copy of your needs assessment report. This document sets out all of the equipment and other support recommended after your assessment.

Make sure you respond saying whether you agree with the report so the next stage of the process can happen.

A copy of the report will be sent to SFE/LA/OU and, if you agree, to the Disability Adviser at your university.

If you are unhappy or unsure of anything in the report, contact the assessor and ask them about it.

6.

SFE/LA will write to you to let you know if they have any queries or if they approve the recommendations in the report. They will tell you how to order any recommended equipment.

The Open University will order any approved equipment and software for you.

Your university's Disability Adviser will help you with this and with arranging your other support, as recommended. Contact them as soon as you get the report.

Note for: Part-time, postgraduate, and distance learning students; and those full-time students who only wish to apply for DSAs and no other funding.

When completing your DSA application form (DSA1), you'll need to ask your university to complete a section of the form before it can be sent off to Student Finance England or your Local Authority. This does not apply to Open University students.

Useful websites

www.direct.gov.uk/dsas

Provides full details about who is eligible to receive DSAs, and the amounts of funding available. Application forms (DSA1) can be downloaded from this site.

www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

For more information about the full range of financial help available to higher education students from England.

www.skill.org.uk

Independent advice and guidance about applying for DSAs and studying in higher education.

www.dsa-qag.org.uk

Helps you search for contact details of approved Assessment Centres by region or town.

www.nus.org.uk

The National Union of Students website.

www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

For students studying an NHS funded course, giving details of how they can apply for DSAs.

www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/disabledstudents/

For students getting Research Council funding, giving details of how they can apply for DSAs.

www.open.ac.uk/disability/disabled-students-allowance.php

Email: DSA-Queries@open.ac.uk

Tel: 01908 654136

This guide is aimed at students living in England. If you normally live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland you will need to contact:

Student Finance Wales

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Information about DSAs and other financial help for higher education students who normally live in Wales.

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland

www.student-support-saas.gov.uk

Information about DSAs and other financial help for higher education students who normally live in Scotland.

Student Finance Northern Ireland

www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

Information about DSAs and other financial help for higher education students who normally live in Northern Ireland.

The National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) is an independent, professional network of student money advisers, administrators of discretionary funds and institutional bursary administrators for higher education students in the UK.

NASMA is widely recognised as a leading authority on all matters relating to student finance issues. NASMA members aim to relieve the poverty of students through accurate and appropriate advice and guidance. We also strive to influence policy decisions and disseminate good practice across the sector.

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Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
(www.bis.gov.uk)

and the National Association of Student Money Advisers (www.nasma.org.uk)

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