

Extra help - Disabled Students' Allowances

sfe

studentfinanceengland
the student finance experts

www.gov.uk/studentfinance

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What is Student Finance England?

Student Finance England is a service provided by the Student Loans Company. We provide financial support on behalf of the UK Government to students from England entering higher education in the UK. We're here to help and can offer you financial support when you need it most — during your studies.

We're experts in student finance and this guide will tell you everything you need to know about Disabled Students' Allowances.

Depending on your circumstances, your course and where you study, you may be able to get a range of financial help and support. You could get grants and bursaries (which you don't have to pay back) and loans (which you do) and most students won't have to pay any tuition fees up front.

For information on applying for student finance, see the following:



If you're a new student, read **'Student finance – new full-time students'**.

If you're already a student, read **'Student finance - continuing full-time students'**.



For everything you need to know about student finance, visit SFE's student finance zone on The Student Room at www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance

Read our interactive quick start guides at www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/quickstartguides



When it's time to apply, visit: www.gov.uk/studentfinance



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?? 1-What's this guide about?

This guide provides information about Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for new and continuing students in higher education.

You're considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

What are DSAs?

DSAs are grants to help pay the extra essential costs you may have as a direct result of your disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. You don't have to pay these back.

DSAs can help with the cost of having a person to support you (such as a note-taker or a sign language interpreter), items of specialist equipment, travel and other study-related costs.

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and doesn't cover all circumstances. If you don't ordinarily live in England, you can find out more information about what's available where you live from the following websites.

Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk

Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Northern Ireland: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

Do I have to tell my university or college about my disability?

No. You can still get DSAs without telling your university or college, but it's helpful if they know so you get all the support you need.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it's unlawful for universities and colleges to discriminate against disabled students by treating them less favourably when offering places and providing services.

Under the Act, universities and colleges must make 'reasonable adjustments' so disabled students aren't significantly disadvantaged compared with other students who aren't disabled.

You can apply for DSAs as soon as the application service opens. The sooner you apply, the more likely it is you'll have everything you need ready for the start of your course.



2-Do I qualify?

This section gives some information about who's eligible to get DSAs. You can also visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance for more information.



Find out if you qualify

You can get DSAs if you have a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or a specific learning difficulty which has a long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, and you:

- are on an eligible full or part-time undergraduate course (for example, a degree or HND-level course) including distance-learning courses; or
- are on an eligible postgraduate course (which you need a degree or equivalent qualification to get onto), including distance learning courses.

Any previous study won't affect your eligibility for DSAs, even if you got financial support. However, if you got DSAs for any specialist equipment for a previous course, this will be taken into account. There's no age limit on getting DSAs.

You can't get DSAs if you're:

- getting support equivalent to DSAs from another funding provider;
- an EU student;
- an overseas student;
- getting funding from the NHS;
- getting funding from a research council; or
- a sandwich-course student on a full-year placement.

You may still be able to get DSAs if you're doing certain types of unpaid work experience in the public sector or voluntary sector. If you don't qualify for DSAs during your placement year, you may be able to get help from the Access to Work Scheme. Visit www.gov.uk for more information.

You can't get DSAs for more than one course at the same time.



2-Do I qualify?



How do I show I'm eligible?

If you're physically disabled, blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing or have a long-term health condition or mental-health condition, you'll need to provide medical evidence of this, such as a letter from your doctor or specialist.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you must provide a full diagnostic report, carried out after the age of 16, by a practitioner psychologist or a suitably qualified specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate.

If your diagnostic report was carried out before you were 16, you must get an up-to-date report.

You'll have to pay for any tests you need to prove you're able to get DSAs. If you need a test but can't afford to pay for it, you may be able to get financial help from your university or college.

The information below shows what medical evidence you need to send us.

For physical disabilities, long-term health conditions and mental-health conditions	A medical report or a written medical statement from a doctor or qualified specialist confirming your disability, long-term health condition or mental-health condition and how this will affect your ability to study.
For specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia	A full diagnostic assessment, carried out after you turned 16, from a: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• chartered or practitioner psychologist; or• suitably qualified specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate.

Once we've received your application form and medical evidence we may ask you to book a Study Needs Assessment.

A Study Needs Assessment is an informal meeting with an experienced Needs Assessor to discuss what equipment and support we can provide to help you during your time at university or college.

The cost of the Study Needs Assessment is paid through DSAs. We'll only pay for one Study Needs Assessment, but you can be re-assessed at a later date if your needs change significantly.



3-What can I get?



What help is available?

DSAs can help pay the essential extra costs you may have as a direct result of your disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia.

There's a range of help available, which is described in more detail in this section. The amounts given are the maximum payable, although most students will need less. You might also be able to get extra help from your university or college.



Undergraduate students



Specialist Equipment Allowance

What's it for?

To help you buy any major items of specialist equipment you need because of your disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty.

If you need a computer, or your existing computer doesn't meet the specifications set out in the Study Needs Assessment, DSAs can help with the cost of this.

If you're applying for DSAs for the first time (or are starting a new period of study), you'll have to make a contribution of £200 towards the cost of any computer.

DSAs can also pay for repairs, technical support, insurance or extended warranty costs arising from owning that equipment.

Do I have to pay it back?

No. However, if you purchase equipment before starting your course and then fail to attend, you'll need to pay for or return the equipment.

How much can I get?

Full-time and part-time students can get up to £5,358 for the whole course. How much you can get doesn't depend on your household income, but does depend on your individual needs.

Anything else?

The amount shown is the maximum you can get. It's aimed at supporting those with a high level of need, so most people will get less.

The money will be paid directly to the equipment supplier or (in some circumstances) into your bank account.

If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.



3-What can I get?



Non-medical Helper Allowance

What's it for?

To help pay for support workers (such as readers, sign language interpreters or note-takers) and other non-medical assistants you need to use to benefit fully from your course.

Do I have to pay it back?

No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you'll have to pay back any payments you got after you left.

How can a non-medical helper help me?

The type of non-medical help you get will depend on your individual needs, but your support workers should have a good understanding of the support you need and be reliable and trustworthy.

To get the most effective help possible from your support worker, you should let them know if you have any specific requirements, for example if you have a note taker you should let them know what font and text size is best for you.

You should also give them a copy of your timetable and let them know if any class times or rooms change.

How much can I get?

How much you get doesn't depend on your household income, but does depend on your individual needs. The table below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full time	Up to £21,305 a year.
Part time	A percentage of the full-time amount, depending on how intensive the part-time course is, up to £15,978 a year.

Anything else?

The amounts shown above are the maximum available. It's aimed at supporting those with a high level of need, so most people will get less.

The money will be paid directly to the supplier of the service (for example, your university or college or a support agency) or (in some circumstances) into your bank account.

If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.



3 - What can I get?



Travel Allowance

What's it for?

To help with any extra travel costs you may have to pay to attend your university or college because of your disability (for example, if you need to take a taxi because your disability prevents you from taking public transport). You won't be eligible for help with everyday travel costs which any student would expect to pay and you may have to provide receipts.

Do I have to pay it back?

No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.

How much can I get?

Full-time and part-time students can get reasonable spending on extra travel costs. How much you get doesn't depend on your income, but does depend on your individual needs.

Anything else?

The money will be paid directly to the supplier of the services (for example, a taxi firm) or into your bank account. If you're claiming using a 'Claim for reimbursement of costs through Disabled Students' Allowances' form, available from www.gov.uk/studentfinance, remember to keep any receipts or invoices as evidence.

If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your chosen university or college.



General Allowance

What's it for?

To help pay other course-related costs you may have as a direct result of your disability.

Do I have to pay it back?

No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.

How much can I get?

How much you get doesn't depend on your income, but does depend on your individual needs. The information below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full time	Up to £1,790 a year.
Part time	A percentage of the full-time amount up to a maximum of £1,342 a year depending on how intensive the course is.

Anything else?

The amounts shown are the maximum available. If you are asked to attend a Study Needs Assessment, the General Allowance can be used to pay for the assessment and any travel expenses for attending. If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.



3 - What can I get?

For full-time and part-time postgraduate students

For both full-time and part-time postgraduate students there's a single allowance of up to £10,652 a year.

You can use this for specialist equipment, non-medical helpers, extra travel costs or other course-related costs.

The amount of DSAs you get will depend on your individual needs. Usually, postgraduate students will not need to attend a new Study Needs Assessment if they have already had one when studying at undergraduate level.

Students on Postgraduate (or Professional) Certificate of Education (PGCE) courses can apply for the full package of DSAs awarded to undergraduate students.

Initial Teacher Training courses (ITT)

If you're already on an ITT course, you can continue to apply for the same package of DSAs support you've had in previous years.

Students who started a full-time ITT course on or after 1 September 2010 can apply for the full-time support package, including the full-time DSAs package.

Students who started a part-time ITT course on or after 1 September 2010 can apply for the standard part-time student support package, including part-time DSAs.

Benefits

Most full-time students can't get income-related benefits such as Universal Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance or Housing Benefit.

However, certain groups (including single parents, student couples with dependent children and some disabled students) may be able to get income-related benefits while they're studying.

Jobcentre Plus and your local authority's Housing Benefit section will take into account any Maintenance Loan (and some student grants) you're entitled to. The Special Support Grant and DSAs won't be taken into account.

For more detailed information visit www.gov.uk



4-How and when do I apply?

Apply as soon as the application service opens as the application process can take 14 weeks. The sooner you apply, the more likely it is you'll have everything you need ready for the start of your course.

Undergraduate students

What to do and when to do it in three easy steps!

Step 1

New full-time students

Once you've applied for your main student finance and told us you want to apply for DSAs we'll send you an application form.

If you only want to apply for DSAs and no other type of student finance, you need to complete a DSA1 application form which you'll be able to download at www.gov.uk/studentfinance once the service opens. Apply early as the application process for DSAs can take around 14 weeks.

New part-time students

You can apply for DSAs by downloading a DSA1 application form at www.gov.uk/studentfinance when the service opens. Fill this in and return it to us.

Step 2

Once you've applied for DSAs we may ask you to arrange an appointment with an Independent Needs Assessor to find out exactly what equipment and support you need.

A Study Needs Assessment helps us work out how we can support your needs during your time at university or college. It's not a test – it's your chance to have an informal chat with a specialist advisor about your disability and the impact it has on your studies.

During your Study Needs Assessment your assessor will work out what you need to help you get the most from your time at uni or college.

If we ask you to do this, you should book this assessment as soon as possible. To find your nearest approved Study Needs Assessment centre go to www.dsa-qag.org.uk

Step 3

We'll confirm what specialist equipment and other support DSAs can pay for.

We'll also give instructions for ordering any specialist equipment or arranging other support.

If your course or your needs change, you should contact us as soon as possible.



4-How and when do I apply?

Postgraduate students

If you're a postgraduate student and you want to apply for DSAs, you should fill in the Disabled Students' Allowances application form (DSA1) and send it to us.

You can download the form at www.gov.uk/studentfinance

NHS funding

If you're getting funding from the NHS, you can visit the website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students for more information. If you're getting an undergraduate social work bursary, you should apply to us.

Research Councils

Students getting funding from research councils can visit the website at www.rcuk.ac.uk/skills/training for more information on how to apply for DSAs.

NHS secondees

If you're employed by the NHS and are seconded (transferred temporarily) onto a healthcare course, you're not eligible for bursaries or DSAs from the NHS. However, you can get DSAs from us if you meet the eligibility conditions in section 2.



5-Useful information and contacts



Student Finance England

For more information and to apply, visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance

For everything you need to know about student finance, visit SFE's student finance zone on The Student Room at www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance

You can also phone us on **0300 100 0607** (textphone: **0300 100 0622**) between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday, and between 9am and 4pm on Saturday.

Disabled Students' Allowances Quality Assurance Group

Details of your nearest needs assessment centre are given on the DSA-QAG website at www.dsa-qag.org.uk

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK runs a free helpline providing information and advice to disabled students as well as publishing 'Into Higher Education', an annual guide for disabled students thinking about entering higher education.

Visit the Disability Rights UK website at www.disabilityrightsuk.org.uk

Phone: **0800 328 5050** 11am to 1pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org

National Union of Students (NUS)

You can get more information from the NUS website at www.nus.org.uk

Scholarship Search UK

Provides information about other sources of funding for undergraduates. Visit www.scholarship-search.org.uk

Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)

The EASS helpline can give information and guidance on equality, discrimination and human rights issues.

Phone: **0808 800 0082** Textphone: **0808 800 0084**

Lines are open from 9am to 8pm on Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 2pm on Saturday.

Visit the EASS website at www.equalityadvisoryservice.com