

How to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances

**Full-time
undergraduate**

Disability Advice and Support



Student Services

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Who is this information for?

This booklet is for anyone applying for or studying a full-time undergraduate course who wants to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) on the basis of a disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference such as dyslexia, which affects their studies.

If you have a mental health condition, you may be able to apply for DSAs. The University has a Mental Health Adviser who will advise you on this and support you through the application process. (See 'Useful contacts and resources' at the end of this booklet for further information.)

What are Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)?

They are Government funding, designed to pay for extra costs you have at university as a direct result of the effects of a disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference. They can help pay for specialist equipment, study-related academic human support, travel and other support which will help you overcome the effects of your disability on your studies.

They will not pay for:

- Costs you would have whether or not you were at university, for example personal care assistance. Your local Social Services department may be able to help you with such costs, and you should contact them before you go to university to find out about this
- Non-disability related costs incurred by all students on a particular course, for example course-specific software, such as Computer Aided Design (CAD) packages.

DSAs are available to students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who fulfil eligibility criteria defined by the Government. The rules for students in each country are very similar.

You can find details of each country's Funding Provider and their contact details in 'Useful contacts and resources' at the end of this booklet.

Will I automatically receive the funding?

No, not even if you received support at school or college because you had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. You have to apply and demonstrate that you will have extra costs on your course because of the effects of a disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference. In order to do this, you will need to use independent evidence which details your condition. If you have more than one condition which will affect your studies, you will need to provide evidence of each one.

Who is eligible to apply?

You can apply for the DSAs if:

- The course you are intending to study attracts Student Support Package funding, ie, you can apply for the Maintenance Loan and support with the course fees

AND

- You are personally eligible for a Maintenance Loan. This can be part or all of the Loan.

You are not eligible to apply if your course attracts Student Support funding but you are not personally eligible for the Maintenance Loan. This includes EU students, who receive support with their fees, but are not eligible for the Maintenance Loan

Students in receipt of an NHS Bursary are eligible to apply.

DipHE Nursing students seconded by their NHS Trust and therefore not in receipt of an NHS Bursary are eligible to apply for DSAs. Seconded nurses can follow the application process detailed in this booklet.

How do I apply?

This depends on the type of course you are intending to study.

All students will need to apply to their Funding Provider; see 'Useful contacts and resources' at the end of this booklet.

You can start your DSAs application when you start applying for the Student Support Package. If you are applying to university, you will complete a PN1 form, called 'Application for Student Finance 2010/11', to apply for the Student Support Package. You should tick the box in the Disabled Students' Allowances section on page three to start your DSAs application.

If you are a continuing student, you will complete a PR1 form, called 'Application for Student Finance 2010/11' to apply for the Student Support Package. You should tick the box in the Disabled Students' Allowances section, to indicate that you would like to apply for DSAs.

As a result of ticking the DSAs box on the PN1 or PR1 form, you will be sent a DSA1 form to complete and return. This is an 'Application for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)'. You will need to enclose formal written evidence detailing your disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference with your completed form.

If you have not ticked the DSAs box on the PN1 or PR1 form, you can obtain a DSA1 form from your Funding Provider, Disability Advice and Support or download one from your Funding Provider's website, see 'Useful contacts and resources' at the end of this booklet for details.

If you have decided not to complete a PN1 or PR1 form, you can still apply for DSAs. You will need to ask the Student Administrative Support Division in Academic Registry to complete Section five of the DSA1 form. This is because the University must formally declare that your course is eligible for DSAs funding.

Disability Advice and Support staff have produced the following booklets which detail what should be included in letters from medical professionals and Psychological Assessment reports accepted by your Funding Provider:

- Proof of disability or medical condition required when applying for Disabled Students' Allowances
- Proof of Specific Learning Difference (including dyslexia) required when applying for Disabled Students' Allowances.

You may like to contact your Funding Provider to find out if there is a particular Awards Officer who assesses DSAs applications, so that you can address your letter to a named person.

When they have received your form and/or letter, your Funding Provider will write to you regarding your application.

What if I have been to university before?

You should still be eligible for DSAs, but may need to discuss your particular circumstances with your Funding Provider.

What if I am not 'Registered Disabled'?

You do not have to be registered disabled, or in receipt of disability-related benefits to apply for the DSAs.

Will my income be taken into account?

No. Neither your income nor that of your partner or family will be taken into account when you apply for the DSAs.

Will I have to repay the DSAs when I have finished my course?

No. This type of funding is a grant, rather than a loan.

What can the DSAs pay for?

The Allowances are arranged into four parts. You can receive funding from one, all, or a combination of each part, depending on what is appropriate for you. The four parts are as follows:

1. Specialist Equipment Allowance

The range of specialist equipment funded through the DSAs is quite wide, depending on the effects of a person's disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference. The following are examples of the types of equipment that may be funded:

- IT solutions, which may include a PC, printer, scanner
- Specialist software ie, screen-reader; mind-mapping; speech to text
- Recording devices for use in lectures and seminars
- Adapted keyboards.

Sometimes students in their final year may be provided with rented equipment, paid for by this part of the Allowances.

2. Non-medical Helper's Allowance

This allowance can pay for study-related human support to enable you to access your course fully. This can include the following types of support:

- Training in the use of specialist software
- Sign-language interpreters
- Note-takers for lectures
- Scribes for exams
- Readers
- Library browsers
- Study strategies tuition for those with Specific Learning Differences

- English tuition for those with British Sign Language as their first language.

3. General Allowance

This can be used:

- For buying 'consumable' items related to specialist equipment funded via the DSAs eg, printer paper, ink cartridges
- For buying 'disability-related' items eg Braille paper, German film, photocopying cards
- To top up the specialist equipment or non-medical helper's allowance if necessary.

4. Travel Costs

The allowance can include reasonable extra travel costs to and from university, incurred because of the effect of the student's disability. For example, where a student is unable to travel to lectures by public transport and needs to use an adapted taxi instead.

Is there a set amount of funding?

The amount of funding varies on an individual basis, in terms of what a student needs because of the effects of their disability on their studies. There is, however, a limit to the amount of funding available. The limit varies, depending on the level of course studied.

How much funding is available?

The maximum amount available changes slightly each year. The amounts quoted are those for full-time undergraduate students in academic year 2010/11.

- Specialist Equipment Allowance
Up to £5161 for the whole of the course
- Non-medical Helper's Allowance (Academic Human Support)
Up to £20,520 a year
- General Allowance
Up to £1724 a year

- **Travel Costs**
The amount available is determined on an individual basis, according to need

What will the DSAs not pay for?

They will not pay for disability-related costs which would be incurred whether or not you were at university, or equipment required by all students on a particular course, examples include:

- Personal care support
- Additional subject-specific tuition
- Equipment available for students on a course to use via a booking system, for example video recording equipment
- A type of equipment which is not required because of the effects of a disability. For example, a student would benefit from having their own computer and would like a laptop. If there is no disability-related justification why they should have a laptop, the DSAs will not pay for one.

Will I receive the full amount?

Not necessarily. The amount of funding you will receive depends upon what is recommended to help overcome the effects of your disability on your studies.

How do I find out what I need?

You will have to have a 'needs assessment'. You must obtain approval from your Funding Provider to have a needs assessment. This is usually granted after you have sent them the independent evidence detailing your condition.

The assessment will be carried out by a specialist assessor who will have a detailed discussion with you about the ways in which your disability, medical condition or Specific Learning Difference affects your studies. They will make suggestions as to the types of support which should assist you at university.

The outcome of the needs assessment is a formal report detailing all the support you are recommended to receive from the DSAs while at university. The report will be sent to you and your Funding Provider. Once your Funding Provider has received the report, they will be clear about the support recommended for you and how much funding this will cost from the DSAs.

The fee for your needs assessment will be paid from the DSAs.

Disability Advice and Support staff have produced the booklet **What is a needs assessment?** which explains the needs assessment in more detail. This is available from Disability Advice and Support on request, see 'Useful contacts and resources' for contact details.

When can I have a needs assessment?

You can have an assessment when you have sent your independent evidence to your Funding Provider and received their written permission to have an assessment.

If you are applying to university, this may be before the start of your course, and could be before you have made your final decision as to which university or course you will attend. In this case, it may be necessary for you to have a shorter, top-up assessment when you start your course as you may not have been able to provide the assessor with complete information about the course requirements at the original assessment.

How long does the application process take?

This can vary, usually depending on the number of applications being made.

The Government has not specified a timescale in which Funding Providers should process an application, other than stating that it should be within a 'reasonable amount of time'. As a guide, the following is a breakdown of the stages of an application with approximate timescales:

Decision of Funding Provider after receiving independent evidence

A 'reasonable amount of time' is interpreted as being four to five weeks from the Funding Provider receiving the independent evidence. However, it can be as short as one week, or more than five weeks. If it is over five weeks, you should contact your Funding Provider to check progress.

Needs assessment appointment

You may have to wait for several weeks before an assessor can see you at busy times of the year. However, De Montfort University is now a satellite centre of the Open University Assessment Centre. This means that Open University Assessors conduct needs assessments for De Montfort University applicants and students on our Campus. It may be possible to arrange an appointment at the University within three weeks of you receiving permission to have a needs assessment. However, you will need to inform Disability Advice and Support that you have received permission, as we are not automatically informed.

Needs assessment report

You should receive the draft copy of the report two or three weeks after the appointment. Sometimes this can be longer, for example, if the assessor has to research a very specialist type of support that they are recommending for you.

Funding Provider's decision based on needs assessment report

This should be a 'reasonable amount of time' after they have received the report, which may be four or five weeks.

Support being in place

This can depend on how the support is arranged. For example, the Funding Provider may order equipment on your behalf, but instruct you to make arrangements for the rest of your support; they may suggest that Disability Advice and Support helps you arrange the support. If you would like assistance with these arrangements, you must provide Disability Advice and Support staff with a copy of the letter containing this information, as we will not automatically receive a copy. You may also need to provide us with a copy of your needs assessment report, as we will not automatically receive a copy.

Can I buy equipment before my course start?

You may be allowed to buy your equipment shortly before your course starts, to enable you to become familiar with it. In this case, you should ask your Funding Provider about the possibility of having any training on specialist software recommended in your needs assessment report before the start of your course too.

Who is the money paid to?

Your Funding Provider can either pay you so that you can pay suppliers yourself, or they can pay suppliers directly.

We strongly recommend that you give permission for payment to be made directly to suppliers, as it will be easier for you when you are managing your finances. This will mean that you are not invoiced for support e.g. one-to-one tuition or note takers. It will also mean that you have to send fewer receipts to your Funding Provider and can concentrate on using your support on your course.

What if I decide to wait a year before I go to university?

You should inform your Funding Provider of your decision. You will not have to repay the cost of the assessment. However, you may have to request a shorter, top-up assessment before you go to university, as the recommendations may need to be updated.

What if I transfer to another course?

You should inform your Funding Provider of your decision.

You should be eligible for the DSAs on your new course. It is important to bear in mind that some of the recommendations may need to be updated. If this is the case, you should request another needs assessment.

However, if you have received the maximum specialist equipment allowance, you will not be

eligible for further money from this fund. This is because this allowance is a set amount for the duration of your course. Therefore, if you require additional specialist equipment for your new course, it may not be possible to have this funded via the DSAs. You may be able to top up the funds in the specialist equipment allowance from the general allowance, and should ask your Funding Provider for guidance in these circumstances.

What if I have to repeat part of my course?

You must inform your Funding Provider if you are required to repeat part of your course. You may continue to receive your DSAs support, depending on the reason you have to repeat part of your course. You should seek guidance from your Funding Provider.

What if I have to take a break from my course?

You must inform your Funding Provider of your decision. They should re-start your DSAs when you return to your course. It is therefore very important that they know when you intend to break from and resume your studies.

What happens to the equipment when I finish my course?

The equipment is your property, both while you are studying and when you have finished.

Will I have to repay the DSAs if I do not finish my course?

You will be asked to return any DSAs money that you have received but have not yet spent on equipment or support.

What if I am not satisfied?

If you have provided all of the information required, but disagree with your Funding Provider's decision, you should ask them how to appeal. Disability

Advice and Support staff may be able to help you with an appeal.

If you are not happy with the way you have been dealt with by your Funding Provider, you should ask for their complaints procedure. Disability Advice and Support staff may be able to help you make a complaint.

Useful contacts and resources

Disability Advice and Support

The contact details for Disability Advice and Support at De Montfort University are:

T: (0116) 257 7595
E: disability@dmu.ac.uk

Disability Advice and Support
Student Services
De Montfort University
The Gateway
Leicester LE1 9BH

We have produced a series of booklets relating to Specific Learning Differences and disabilities and support at university.

The booklets are also available on the Disability Advice and Support's web pages, at dmu.ac.uk/disability

These booklets can be requested from Disability Advice and Support in alternative formats.

Mental Health Adviser

The University's Mental Health Adviser can be contacted by telephone on (0116) 257 7602.

Funding Providers

Student Finance England
W: direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
T: 0845 300 50 90.

Student Finance Wales
W: studentfinancewales.co.uk
T: 0845 602 8845.

Student Finance NI
W: studentfinancenl.co.uk
T: 0845 600 0662.

Student Awards Agency for Scotland
W: saas.gov.uk
T: 0845 111 1711.

- Contact your national Student Finance Service for an update on your funding application
- If you still haven't applied for your funding, you can do so online at the above websites
- You can download all student finance forms (PN1, PR1, CO1, Tuition Fee Loan Request form) from these websites

DSA1 form and guidance notes

You can download a copy of the DSA1 form and guidance notes from your Funding Provider's website.

You can also obtain a copy of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills' booklet about DSAs – 'Bridging the Gap' from your Funding Provider's website or by telephoning the free information line on 0800 731 9133 quoting reference **S/BTGB/V10**. You can request the booklet in large print, or on audio tape.

More information about needs assessments

For more detailed information about needs assessments, also called Study Aids and Strategies Assessments, see the Disability Advice and Support booklet called 'What is a needs assessment?'

Alternatively, you can access a document called 'Information about the Study Aids and Study Strategies Assessment (Needs Assessment)', on the National Network of Assessment Centres' (NNAC) website: nnac.org/sassa.html

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Chapter House
18-20 Crucifix Lane
London SE1 3JW

Skill's Information Service is available on:

Tuesdays 11.30am–1.30pm, and
Thursdays 1.30–3.30pm

T: 0800 328 5050
Minicom: 0800 068 2422

E: info@skill.org.uk
W: skill.org.uk

Skill is an independent charity that promotes opportunities for people with any kind of disability in learning and employment.

The organisation provides a free information and advice service for individual disabled people and the professionals who work with them, via their freephone helpline, email and their website.

Skill have published several booklets and information sheets, covering topics including applying to university; the Disabled Students' Allowances.

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Alternative formats

Where possible DMU publications can be supplied in alternative media. This includes via email (.pdf), CD-ROM and DVD-ROM.

You may request a large font size, audio or Braille version of any publication and where possible, this will be supplied for you. It may not be possible to supply all publications in full, due to size. On these occasions, you will be asked to request specific sections only.

DMU will make every effort to find an appropriate alternative format for all requests. For further information on how we can help, please contact The Enquiry Centre on 08459 45 46 47, dmu.ac.uk/enquiry or text phone +44 (0)116 257 7908.

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