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the student finance experts

STUDENT FINANCE
MATTERS
TO ME



BRIDGING THE GAP

A GUIDE TO DISABLED
STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES
(DSAS) IN HIGHER EDUCATION
2014/15

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 '**A guide to financial support for new full-time students in higher education 2014/15**'. If you're already a student, read '**A guide to financial support for students continuing in full-time higher education in 2014/15**'.

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

For a range of helpful tools and guidance, visit: www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance



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SECTION 1

WHAT'S THIS GUIDE ABOUT?



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

WHAT'S THIS GUIDE ABOUT?

WHAT ARE DSAs?

DSAs are grants to **HELP PAY THE EXTRA COSTS** you may have as a direct result of your disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition, or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. You don't have to pay these back.

The allowances can **HELP WITH THE COST OF HAVING A PERSON TO SUPPORT YOU** (for the additional support you may require while studying), such as a note-taker, 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, LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION, MENTAL-HEALTH CONDITION OR SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTY?

NO. You can still get DSAs without telling your university or college. But **IT IS HELPFUL TO TELL YOUR UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE** about your disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty in complete confidence, to make sure you get 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.

TOP TIP

You can apply for DSAs now. The sooner you apply, the greater the chance of having everything you need in place at the start of your course.

SECTION 2

DO I QUALIFY?

FIND OUT IF YOU QUALIFY

This section gives some information about who's eligible to get DSAs.

You can also visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance for more information.



DO I QUALIFY?

FIND OUT IF YOU QUALIFY

You can get DSAs if you have a disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or a specific learning difficulty which affects your ability to study, and you:

- are on an eligible undergraduate course (for example, a degree or HND-level course) including distance-learning courses; or
- are on an eligible full-time or 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 may 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 the website at www.gov.uk for more information.)

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

HOW DO I SHOW I'M ELIGIBLE?

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

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you must provide evidence of 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 through your university or college's Financial Contingency Fund.

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

For disabilities and long-term health conditions	▶▶	A report or letter from your GP or consultant
For specific learning difficulties	▶▶	A report, produced since you turned 16, from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a chartered or practitioner psychologist; or • a specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate.
For other conditions including mental-health conditions	▶▶	A letter from your GP or other qualified specialist.

Once we have received your application form and medical evidence you'll be asked to book a needs assessment.

A needs assessment helps us learn how we can support your needs during your time at university or college. The cost of the needs assessment is paid through DSAs. We'll only pay for one needs assessment unless your needs change significantly.



SECTION 3 WHAT CAN I GET?

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

DSAs can help pay the extra costs you must incur on your course because of your disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty.

There's a range of help available, which is described in more detail in this section. The amounts given are the maximum you can get.

TOP TIP

The amount you can get doesn't depend on your household income but does depend on your needs assessment.

WHAT CAN I GET?

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, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty.

You can also use it to pay for repairs, technical support, insurance or extended warranty costs arising from owning that equipment.

DO I HAVE TO PAY IT BACK?

NO, even if you leave your course early, as long as you have registered and attended at least one day of your course, you would not have to repay for any of the equipment even if you do leave the course early, unless you received the equipment after you had left.

HOW MUCH CAN I GET?

Full-time and part-time students can get up to **£5,212** for the whole course.

How much you can get doesn't depend on your income or that of your family, but does depend on your needs assessment.

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.

We might pay the cost of renting rather than buying items of equipment if this is more economical.

The money will be paid direct 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.

NON-MEDICAL HELPER ALLOWANCE

WHAT'S IT FOR?

To help pay for **SUPPORT WORKERS** such as readers, sign-language interpreters, note-takers, specialist one-to-one support and other non-medical assistants you need to use to benefit fully from your course.

DO I HAVE TO PAY IT BACK?

NO, however if you leave your course early you'll have to pay back any payments you might get after you leave.

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.

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?

How much you get **doesn't** depend on your income or that of your family, but **does** depend on your needs assessment.

The table below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full-time ►► Up to **£20,725** a year.

Part-time ►► A percentage of the full-time amount, depending on how intensive the part-time course is, up to **£15,543** 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 direct 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.

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 or that of your family but does depend on your needs assessment.

ANYTHING ELSE?

The money will be paid direct to the supplier of the services (for example, a taxi firm) or into your bank account. If you're claiming using a 'reimbursement of costs 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 disability- and course-related costs. You can use it to buy items such as print cartridges and Braille paper, or to top up the specialist equipment and non-medical helper allowances if necessary.

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.

ANYTHING ELSE?

The amounts shown are the maximum available. You can also use this allowance to pay any travel expenses for attending your needs assessment. The money is refunded to your bank account when you supply a receipt. The General Allowance is also used to pay for the needs assessment from 2013/14 onwards.

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

HOW MUCH CAN I GET?

How much you get **doesn't** depend on your income or that of your family, but **does** depend on your needs assessment.

The information below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full-time ▶▶ Up to **£1,741** a year.

Part-time ▶▶ A percentage of the full-time amount to a maximum of **£1,305** a year depending on how intensive the course is



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 £10,362 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 needs assessment. Generally postgraduate students will not need to attend a needs assessment if they have already had one when studying at undergraduate level.

Only one needs assessment is funded through DSAs unless your needs change significantly. Attending a second needs assessment without prior confirmation will not be funded by SFE.

Students on PGCE courses can apply for the DSAs awarded to undergraduates and so won't be eligible for postgraduate DSAs.

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, Support Allowance or Housing Benefit (unless the student has a hearing impairment).

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 account of most of any Maintenance Loan (and some student grants) you're entitled to. The Special Support Grant and DSAs won't be taken into account.

There's a free and confidential Benefit Enquiry Line for people with disabilities and their carers. The number is **0800 882 200** (textphone: **0800 243 355**).

SECTION 4

HOW AND WHEN DO I APPLY?

IN THIS SECTION

So now you know what support is available, how do you get it? This section tells you how to apply for DSAs, who you should send your application form to, and how to get a needs assessment.

Please note you can only attend one needs assessment. Attending a second needs assessment without prior confirmation will not be funded by SFE.

TOP TIP

Apply early as the application process can take 14 weeks. You can apply for DSAs as soon as the service for the academic year opens and the sooner you apply, the greater the chance of having everything you need in place at the start of your course.

HOW AND WHEN DO I APPLY?

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

STEP 1

FULL-TIME STUDENTS

It's now time to apply online for student finance, you can click on the option to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances in the main application. We'll then send you a shortened version of the DSA application form (DSASL) to fill in and return to us. You can also download the shortened form from www.gov.uk/studentfinance

If you're only applying for DSAs and no other form of student finance, download the long DSA application form (DSA1F) from www.gov.uk/studentfinance. Fill this in and return it to us.

STEP 2

If you're eligible for DSAs we'll write to you to tell you to arrange a needs assessment to find out exactly what equipment and support you need.

STEP 3

You should book your needs assessment as soon as you get our letter telling you to arrange one. To find your nearest approved needs assessment centre, go to www.dsa-qag.org.uk

STEP 4

Once we get the results of your needs assessment, we'll write to you to let you know if DSAs can pay for any specialist equipment and other support recommended in your needs assessment. We'll also give you instructions for ordering equipment or arranging other support.

STEP 5

Order your equipment and arrange your other support as soon as you get your entitlement letter. However, be sure to not purchase your equipment before you receive your entitlement letter.

STEP 6

Start your course.

STEP 7

Re-apply for your student finance and for DSA before the start of your course each year.

TOP TIP

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

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 from www.gov.uk/studentfinance or get one by phoning us.

NHS OR RESEARCH COUNCIL FUNDING

If you're getting funding from the NHS or a research council, you can visit the website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx 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/rescareer/rcdu/disabledstudents 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.



USEFUL INFORMATION & CONTACTS

CONTACTS

STUDENT FINANCE ENGLAND

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

For a range of helpful tools and guidance, visit 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 Saturdays.

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES QUALITY ASSURANCE GROUP (DSA-QAG)

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.

Phone: **0800 328 5050** (11.30am to 1.30pm on Tuesdays, and 1.30pm to 3.30pm on 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

This provides information about other sources of funding for undergraduates.

The website is 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 Mondays to Fridays, and from 10am to 2pm on Saturdays).

Visit the EASS website at www.equalityadvisoryservice.com



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ISBN 978-1-907246-52-4

SFE/BTGB/V14/D/A



Department for Business, Innovation & Skills