
Disabled students' allowances



Disabled students allowance (DSA)

DSA is government funded support for students:

- with a disability, long term health condition (including mental health) or specific learning difference which has lasted or is expected to last for 12 months or more.
- studying an undergraduate or postgraduate degree which is longer than 12 months
- eligible for student finance.

DSA is a non-repayable government grant to help towards costs related to your study which you may have as a direct result of your disability. It is separate to social services funding and separate to your maintenance loan. It is separate to other support provided by the University.

If you are an EU or international student, we recommend you check with your sponsor or student finance authority to see if you are eligible for any additional support.

Self-funded students who may need additional support should provide supporting documentation and discuss any needs in advance with the Disability Advisory Service. You can find out more information in our 'Guide to support for Disabled Students'.



What is DSA?

- DSAs are available to pay for support for students with mental health conditions, specific learning differences, long-term conditions, visual and Deaf or hard-of-hearing, Autism Spectrum Condition and students with mobility differences.
- The funding pays for the support rather than going directly to you, and doesn't have to be paid back.
- DSA is additional to other support you may already get, for example care provided by your local adult social care department.
- The funds are for additional study costs that a student incurs as a direct result of studying as a disabled student.
- DSAs can provide a package of support for studying which is individually tailored to your specific requirements.
- It isn't means tested, there is no age limit on applying and you can apply as an undergraduate or postgraduate student.
- It doesn't affect your general student finance application, or your eligibility for any other funding sources.
- The funding is made up of four different types of support; equipment and software, non medical helpers, general and additional disability-related travel costs.
- DSA pays the funding directly to approved suppliers to cover the cost of support you need.

What can DSA provide?

Here are options which may be available to support you, depending on your disability and individual needs. **These are all subject to approval from your funding body.**

Equipment

- **Funding towards the cost of a computer** if you don't already have one and are recommended certain specialist programs
- **Printer/scanner/photocopier**
- **Recording equipment**
- **External monitor**
- **Radio aid**
(for hearing impaired students)
- **Video magnifiers**
- **Ergonomic equipment**
(e.g. ergonomic chair, specialist keyboard and mouse, footrest).

Software

- **Text-to-speech software**
(e.g. ClaroRead or Texthelp Read&Write)
- **Voice recognition dictation software**
(Dragon, TalkType)
- **Recording software**
(e.g. Glean Notetaker, Livescribe)
- **Mind mapping software**
(e.g. MindView, Inspiration, Mindjet)
- **Spelling/grammar software**
(e.g. Global Autocorrect, Grammarly, Medincline, Ginger)
- **Screen reading and/or magnification software**
(e.g. JAWS, Supernova or ZoomText).

Non-medical helpers

- **Specialist one-to-one study skills support**
- **Specialist one-to-one mentoring support**
- **Specialist one-to-one support for hearing impaired or visually impaired students**
- **Notetaking support**
(for students who are blind, visually impaired, Deaf or hard-of-hearing)
- **Mobility training/sighted guide support**
(for students who are blind or visually impaired)
- **BSL interpreters, Lipreaders**
- **Assistive technology training**

General

- **Money towards additional disability-related costs of printing and photocopying**

Travel

- **Extra travel costs incurred to get to university because of your disability** (e.g. contributions towards taxi fares from home to university or placement).



How do I apply?

There are three steps to the process:

- 1** Apply to your funding body by completing an application form and sending it with supporting documentation of your specific learning difference, disability, or physical or mental health condition.
- 2** Once your funding body has approved your application, they will write to you to explain next steps including how to book an appointment with a DSA needs assessor.

This is your opportunity to discuss your needs and what support is available.
- 3** The funding body will review the recommendations and contact you to let you know what they can fund. This will include who to contact to arrange support and where to order equipment.

If you need help or have any questions, please get in touch with the Disability Advisory Service and we will be happy to help.



What isn't funded by DSA?

DSA is only to fund disability related costs related to studying.


DSA is available to fund disability related costs associated with your study. Some things fall outside the remit of DSA. Below is a non-exhaustive list of items that will not be funded:

- Personal care/assistant costs
(please contact the Adult Social Care department in your Local Authority)
- Diagnostic costs, such as the cost of having an assessment of a specific learning difficulty, ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Costs of travel to and from medical appointments
(including counselling/therapy sessions)
- Food or drink, even if used to help manage a health condition
- Medication or treatment costs
(including private counselling/therapy and prescription charges)
- Books or internet costs
- Someone to take notes in lectures for you
(unless you are a student who is blind, visually impaired, Deaf or hard-of-hearing)
- Someone to help you in the library or in labs, or to provide proofreading support.

Useful links

You can apply at any point on your course, or from about February of the year that you have applied to start university. How you apply depends on who is funding your course and there are different forms to complete depending on how you are funded:

Funding body	Link to more information and application forms
Student Finance England	gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa
Student Finance Wales	studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/welsh-student/what-s-available/disabled-students-allowance
Student Finance Ireland	nidirect.gov.uk/articles/financial-help-students-disabilities
Student Awards Agency for Scotland	saas.gov.uk/guides/dsa
Self-funded students	Apply through the funding body of the country that you are resident in.
Research Council	Contact the Disability Advisory Service.
NHS Bursaries	Applications must be made through the Student Services Bursary Online Support System (BOSS): nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary-students/manage-your-nhs-bursary

 If you have any questions, please contact DAS for a chat.

Disability Advisory Service

Carrington Building, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6UA

Tel: 0118 378 4202

Email: disability@reading.ac.uk

reading.ac.uk/essentials/support-and-wellbeing/disability