YOUR STUDENT FINANCE JOURNEY STARTS HERE...
#SFE13/14
Who are Student Finance England?

We, Student finance England, are 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 2013/2014’.

If you’re already a student, read ‘A guide to financial support for students continuing in full-time higher education in 2013/2014’.
What’s this guide about?
This guide provides information about Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) for new and continuing students in higher education.

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, such as a note-taker, items of specialist equipment, travel and other course-related costs.

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and doesn’t cover all circumstances.

If you don’t live in England you can find out more information about what’s available where you live from the following websites.

Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk
Northern Ireland: www.studentfinanceni.co.uk
Scotland: www.saas.gov.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 you can 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

There’s no deadline for applying for DSAs but the sooner you apply, the greater the chance of having everything you need in place at the start of your course.
In this section
This section gives some information about who’s eligible to get DSAs. You can also visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance for more information.

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 a full-time or part-time undergraduate course (for example, a degree or HND-level course) including Open University and other distance-learning courses; or

• are on an eligible full-time or part-time postgraduate course (which you need a degree or equivalent qualification to get onto), including Open University and other 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; 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.
Part-time or Open University (OU) students

To be eligible for DSAs, you must be registered for a part-time or OU undergraduate or postgraduate course that lasts for at least one year and doesn’t take more than four times as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course.

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.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you must provide evidence in the form of a ‘diagnostic assessment’ from a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher. If you had your diagnostic assessment before your 16th birthday, it will need to be updated.

You’ll have to pay for any tests you need to prove you’re eligible for 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 Access to Learning Fund.

The table 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: • a chartered or practitioner psychologist; or • a specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate. |
| For mental-health conditions | A letter from your GP or other qualified specialist. |
DSAs can help pay the extra costs you may have 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.

Undergraduate students

Specialist equipment allowance

What’s it for? To help you buy equipment you may 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.

How much can I get? Full-time and part-time students can get up to £5,161 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.

How’s it paid? The money will be paid direct to the equipment supplier or into your bank account.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Specialist equipment allowance</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do I have to pay it back?</strong></td>
<td>No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anything else?</strong></td>
<td>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 (or the OU) might pay the cost of renting rather than buying items of equipment if this is more economical. If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Non-medical helper allowance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s it for?</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much can I get?</td>
<td>How much you get <strong>doesn’t</strong> depend on your income or that of your family, but <strong>does</strong> depend on your needs assessment. The table below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Up to £20,520 <strong>a year</strong>.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td><strong>A percentage</strong> of the full-time amount, depending on how intensive the part-time course is, up to £15,390 <strong>a year</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How’s it paid?</th>
<th>The money will be paid direct to the supplier of the service (for example, your university or college or a support agency) or into your bank account.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I have to pay it back?</td>
<td>No, unless you leave your course early, in which case we may ask you to pay some back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else?</td>
<td>The amounts shown above are the maximum you can get. They’re aimed at supporting those with a high level of need, so most people will get less.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.</td>
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</table>
# General allowance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s it for?</th>
<th>To help pay other disability-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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much can I get?</td>
<td>How much you get <strong>doesn’t</strong> depend on your income or that of your family, but <strong>does</strong> depend on your needs assessment. The table below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Up to £1,724 <strong>a year</strong>.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td><strong>A percentage</strong> of the full-time amount to a maximum of £1,293 <strong>a year</strong> depending on how intensive the course is</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How’s it paid?</th>
<th>The money will be paid direct to the supplier of the service (for example, your university, college or equipment supplier) or into your bank account.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I have to pay it back?</td>
<td>No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else?</td>
<td>The amounts shown above are the maximums you can get. They’re aimed at supporting those with a high level of need, so most people will get less. You can also use this allowance to pay any travel expenses for attending your needs assessment. If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Information</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What’s it for?</strong></td>
<td>To help with any <strong>extra</strong> 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How much can I get?</strong></td>
<td>Full-time and part-time students can get reasonable spending on <strong>extra</strong> travel costs. How much you get <strong>doesn’t</strong> depend on your income or that of your family but <strong>does</strong> depend on your needs assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How’s it paid?</strong></td>
<td>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 <a href="http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance">www.gov.uk/studentfinance</a> remember to keep any receipts or invoices as evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do I have to pay it back?</strong></td>
<td>No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anything else?</strong></td>
<td>If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your chosen university or college.</td>
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</table>
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 £10,260 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.

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 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 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).
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.

TOP TIP
Apply early as the application process can take 14 weeks. You can apply before starting your course. There’s no deadline for DSAs but the sooner you apply, the greater the chance of having everything you need in place at the start of your course.
Undergraduate students

Step 1

Full-time students
When it’s time to apply online for student finance, you’ll 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 our website at www.gov.uk/studentfinance. Fill this in and return it to us.

Part-time students
If you’re applying for student finance you can apply for DSAs by downloading a shortened version of the DSA application form (DSASL) from www.gov.uk/studentfinance Fill this in and return it to us.
If you’re only applying for DSAs and no other form of student finance, download the full DSA application form (DSA1F) from our website. 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. We’ll only pay for one needs assessment unless your course or needs change significantly. If you’re unhappy with your initial Needs Assessment you should contact us by e-mailing dsa_team@slc.co.uk

TOP TIP
Be sure to book your needs assessment as soon as you get your eligibility letter.
Step 3
You should book your 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.

TOP TIP
Remember to order your equipment and arrange your other support as soon as you get your entitlement letter.

Step 5
Order equipment and arrange your other support as soon as you get our letter telling you to do so.

Step 6
Start your course.

Step 7
Re-apply for your student finance before the start of your course each year.

If you apply for DSAs along with your main application for student finance, you won’t have to reapply for DSAs each year as long as you state on your main application that you want to continue getting them.

TOP TIP
If your course or your needs change, ask us whether you can have a new needs assessment.
Postgraduate students (not OU 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 (see the contact details on page 15).

Open University (OU) students
You should apply direct to the Open University’s Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSA) office. If you’ve told The OU you have a disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or a specific learning difficulty, the OU’s DSA Office will automatically send you all the information you need to apply for DSAs. You’ll need to send your filled-in form, and any relevant documents, back to the Open University’s DSA Office. Or you can apply online at www.open.ac.uk/dsa

NHS or research council funding
If you’re getting funding from the NHS or a research council, contact them (see the contact details on page 16). If you’re getting an undergraduate social work bursary, you should apply to us.

NHS secondees
If you’re employed by the NHS and are seconded (transferred temporarily) onto a healthcare course, you’re not usually eligible for bursaries or DSAs from the NHS. However, you can get DSAs from us if you meet the eligibility conditions.
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 0845 300 5090 (textphone: 0845 604 4434) between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday, and between 9am and 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays.
You can also follow us on facebook and twitter.

/SSFEngland
/sf_england

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 Alliance
Disability Alliance 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: skill4disabledstudents@disabilityalliance.org
Open University (OU)
The OU DSA office deals with OU students who live in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
Phone: 01908 654136
Textphone: 01908 659955
Email: DSA-queries@open.ac.uk
9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Thursday
9am to 5pm on Fridays

National Union of Students (NUS)
You can get more information from the NUS website at www.nus.org.uk.

National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA)
NASMA is a charity working to help students by providing advice, information and training. You can get more information by visiting www.nasma.org.uk

NHS Funding
Students studying a course funded by the NHS can visit the website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx for information on how they can apply for DSAs.

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.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
The EHRC helpline can give information and guidance on discrimination and human rights issues.
Phone: 0800 444 205
Textphone: 0800 444 206
(Lines are open from 9am to 5pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and from 9am to 8pm on Wednesdays).
Visit the EHRC website at www.equalityhumanrights.com.
You can order forms and guides in Braille, in large print or as an audio version by emailing your name and address, specifying what form and format you need, to brailleandlargefonts@slc.co.uk.

Or you can phone us on 0141 243 3686.

Please note: the email address and phone number above can only deal with requests for alternative formats of forms and guides.


Department for Business, Innovation & Skills