

Evidencing your disability and Disabled Student Allowances

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Topics

- What is DSA?
- Who is eligible?
- What do students get?
- How to apply?
- What to ask for from your university?
- Evidence required?
- Brief recap of support at university

What is Disabled Students Allowances (DSA)?

Funded support through Student Finance England (SFE) or relevant funding body for disabled students throughout university studies. It can include a package of approved technology and human support which is provided.

Not a loan – students do not have to pay it back.

Not means tested or dependent on receiving other student finance.

Specialist equipment allowance

Individual assessment for a package of IT support including:

- a device such as a laptop to use to study
- audio recording facility (app or device)
- assistive software apps
- ergonomic equipment depending on your needs

Students usually need to pay the first £200 towards any DSA-funded computer.

Non-medical helper (NMH) allowance

DSA individual assessment for human support such as:

- one-to-one study skills tutoring sessions
- one-to-one mentoring sessions
- specialist communication or orientation support

The **University** may also fund support for:

- notetaking
- campus, library or buddy support
- practical assistance for laboratory, workshop or studio

General and Travel Allowance

May receive support with reasonable spending on extra travel and printing costs incurred due to disability

DSA application process

1. Complete DSA application form – online or paper form
2. Provide supporting medical/diagnostic evidence
3. Book and attend a study needs assessment
4. Receive Needs Assessment Report
5. Receive final funding approval – read through the letter and order equipment / arrange non-medical support
6. DSA will be in place!

1. Complete DSA application form

Can be done online – log into Student Finance account and application should be in 'to-do' list

... or can complete paper application form (available on gov.uk website)

- if undergraduate student, full-time, and in receipt of Student Finance = '*DSA Slim Form*'

- if postgraduate, part-time, and/or not in receipt of Student Finance = '*DSA Long Form*'

Application opens in approx. April before course starts in September

Whole application process can take 10-12 weeks - apply early!

2. Provide medical or diagnostic evidence

Medical evidence of a disability:

- written by a medical professional
- confirming diagnosis/working diagnosis
- date of diagnosis
- explanation of impact on studies
- DSA medical evidence form available online
- GPs can charge for medical evidence

DSA Disabled Students' Allowances
Disability Evidence Form **sfe**

About this form
To get DSAs a medical professional (for example, your GP) needs to provide information about your disability on this form.
Don't complete this form if you have a specific learning difficulty. You need to send us a diagnostic report from a suitably qualified psychologist or specialist teacher instead.

What you need to do
You need to complete your details in section 1.
Then pass the form to the medical professional to complete, sign and date the declaration.
Once they have completed the form, make sure you return it to the address on page 4.
You should keep a copy of this form for your own records. You may require it later for your needs assessment.

Section 1 Personal details

1.1 Customer Reference Number

1.2 Personal details

Title
 Mr Mrs Miss Ms

Forename(s)

Surname

Date of birth (DDMMYYYY)
 / /

! Now pass this form to the medical professional.

1 SFE/DSA/EVID/9

2. Provide medical or diagnostic evidence

Diagnostic evidence of Specific Learning Difference (SpLD):

- written by specialist teacher or Educational Psychologist
- full diagnostic report
- no longer needs to be written post-16
- some universities will fund/contribute to funding of report
- most universities/DSA team will not accept JCQ/Form 8 – need original full report

3. Attend Study Needs Assessment

It's positive process, don't be scared by word 'assessment'

Student is eligible for support if invited to needs assessment – they will get support!

Will be invited by email to book appointment online

No charge to student for attending

Important Information About Your Student Finance

DSA Team <dsa_team@slc.co.uk>

to me ▾

Dear Miss Barker,

Thank you for your recent application for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

We've reviewed your application and can confirm you are eligible for DSA, a letter confirming this is attached to this email.

You'll need to book a Study Needs Assessment at an approved centre. You can find an Assessment Centres here: www.gov.uk/slc/dsa-needs-assessment
Please choose your assessment centre and contact them to book your appointment as soon as possible.

4. Receive Needs Assessment report

Read through report

Check everything discussed in assessment is included – may need to give consent to needs assessor to release report

Wait 10-20 working days for final report to arrive

Disabled Students' Allowances Needs Assessment Report

Student's name	
Student's date of birth	
Customer Reference Number	
Student Contact Email	
Report Reference Number	
Assessment centre details	
Needs Assessor	
Funding body	

Assessment information

Date of assessment	Draft report to centre	Date of review	Final report to student	Report to funding body
29/06/2021	05/07/2021	06/07/2021	06/07/2021	06/07/2021
Centre disclosure	N/A			

Venue type	Venue address	ISR details (If applicable)	
OC	Remote - COVID-19 measures Video call	Date requested	N/A
		Date authorised	N/A
		Authorised by	N/A

5. Receive final funding approval

Report will include list of providers to contact

e.g.,

Your DSA

Specialist Equipment Allowance

Item	Supplier	Contact Details	Quote Number	Amount you'll pay the supplier	Amount we'll pay the supplier
Equipment				£200.00	£1149.63

Your next steps

1. You will need to contact the supplier(s) to arrange your support.
2. Pay the supplier £200.00 towards the cost of the agreed computer. All students are required to pay a contribution of £200.00 towards their agreed computer; we'll pay the rest of the computer cost.

The supplier will want to see a copy of this letter to confirm the agreement they will then invoice us directly for the agreed amount. If you've any issues with the equipment you should contact the supplier.

A breakdown of the items agreed in quote number (500-469-421) can be found in Appendix 1.

Insurance
Insurance is important and is included as a part of your equipment package from the date you receive your equipment. You must ensure you read the terms and conditions of the insurance when you receive your equipment.

DSA can't be used to meet the cost of replacement equipment when the original has been lost, stolen or damaged.

Disabled Students Allowances - useful information

Visit the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website for more information

The 'DSA Hub' is a really helpful website to guide through the process

Top tips for applying for DSA

- Request medical/diagnostic evidence early – speak to school/college/GP
- Apply early – application opens in April before university starts
- Consent to liaise with Student Finance and/or University - need to provide this if you want someone to help with the application
- Will need to set up support once DSA funding in place
- University Disability & Mental Health Advice team should be able to support with process

Which diagnoses are included in the definition of a 'disability'?

According to the Equality Act 2010, a disability is an impairment which has a long-term substantial impact on day-to-day activities.

This includes physical and sensory conditions, specific learning differences such as dyslexia, long-term health conditions, mental health diagnoses and autistic spectrum conditions.

The social model of disability helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled students. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control.

Disability and Mental Health Advisers – what to expect



Recommend reasonable adjustments
such as exam arrangements



Advise academic and support staff



Available to talk through difficulties



Arrange library support

Disability and Mental Health Advisers – what we do



Support requests for halls
accommodation



Provide disabled parking permits



Working with specialist support
agencies/external services for students who
require this help



Supporting with the Disabled Students
Allowances (DSA) application

University support

Aspects to ask about:

- The delivery and availability of teaching materials
- Capture/recording of lectures and seminars
- Provision of any non-medical helper support such as notetaking and campus assistance
- Availability of wellbeing support (e.g., counselling)

Key differences between school and university

Education and Health Care Plans v Disabled Students Allowances (DSA)

DSA & University have different (but related) roles in support

Student responsibility for arranging support

Student to gather appropriate medical/diagnostic evidence

Useful contacts:

Student Finance England DSA team

Tel: 0300 100 0607

Email: dsa_team@slc.co.uk

St Mary's University Twickenham

St Mary's Wellbeing Service

Tel: 020 8240 4353

Email: wellbeing@stmarys.ac.uk

Thank you and any questions?