

Are you off to University or Higher Education?

When Joe was going off to University, we were thinking of all the equipment we were going to have to buy for him, air-conditioning unit, humidifier, etc., as his room in the Halls of Residence would be very small and very hot. We also had to liaise with the University Residence Department to ensure he was not going to be on the ground floor as this would not be safe and secure if he had his window open for the air-con unit.

We were advised about Disability Student Allowances (DSAs).

We decided to apply for a grant to pay for the air-con unit and humidifier. Joe & I then had to go to a local Assessment Centre for them to interview Joe to determine his needs. The Interviewer took a complete history of how ED affects Joe and what affect it has on his academic life. From this she determined that overheating causes lack of concentration and suggested Joe would need a digital voice recorder to record lectures and playback later in case his concentration waned during lectures. He would also need his own laptop with assisted software programs to allow flexibility to move around environments that would be most suitable for him to allow him to continue working efficiently, together with a printer to allow him to photocopy from University library books as he may not be able to tolerate the temperatures in a library. Plus, an air-con unit for his room and a humidifier. The interview took a long time, nearly two hours, but was well worth it as he was granted the cost of all the equipment, together with general allowance per annum for paper, printer ink, non-core books, etc.

Have a look at www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation - the following is an extract from the website....

'DSAs are grants to help meet the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of a disability, ongoing health condition, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. They help disabled people to study in higher education on an equal basis with other students. They are paid on top of the standard student finance package and don't have to be paid back. The amount you get depends on the type of extra help you need - not on your household income.

DSAs be used for? They can help pay for:

- specialist equipment you need for studying - for example, computer software
- non-medical helpers, such as a note-taker or reader
- extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability
- other costs - for example, tapes or Braille paper

You can apply if you are doing an undergraduate or postgraduate course (including a distance-learning course) that is:

- full-time and lasts at least one year
- part-time, lasts at least one year and doesn't take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course

There are two ways to apply for DSAs:

1. if you're applying for DSAs only, you complete form DSA1
2. if you're also applying for the main student finance package, you indicate on the main application that you want to apply for DSAs – and then complete a 'short' version of the DSA1 form.

Whichever route applies to you, apply as early as possible. Don't wait until you've been offered a place at university. Make sure you send the form to the right address. Depending on your circumstances, this could be to Student Finance England, your local authority or the Open University (OU).'

If you would like to talk more about this, please email me diana@edsociety.co.uk

Supporting a normal lifestyle

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