

Disabled Students Allowance 2017/18 – DSA

Depending on your circumstances, the course you are doing and where you study, you may be able to get a range of financial help and support with your education.

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.

You're considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

What are DSA's?

DSAs are grants that help pay the extra essential costs you may have as a direct result of your disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. You don't have to pay these back.

DSAs can help with the cost of having a person to support you, (such as a note-taker or a sign language interpreter), items of specialist equipment, travel and other study-related costs.

The information in this document is for guidance only and does not cover all circumstances.

Do I have to tell my university or college about my disability?

No. You can still get DSAs without telling them, but it is helpful if they do know so you can get all 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 favorably 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.

You can apply for DSAs as soon as the application service opens. The sooner you apply, the more likely it is you'll have everything you need ready for the start of your course.

Do I Qualify?

You can get DSAs if you have a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or a specific learning difficulty which has a long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, and you;

- Are on an eligible or part-time undergraduate course (for example, a degree or HND-level course) including distance-learning courses; or
- Are on an eligible postgraduate course (which you need a degree or equivalent qualification to get onto), including distance learning courses.

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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 will be taken into account. There is no age limit on getting DSAs.

What can I get?

There's a range of help available. The amounts given are the maximum payable, although most students will need less. You might also be able to get extra help from your university or college.

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

If you need a computer, or your existing computer doesn't meet the specifications set out in the Study Needs Assessment, DSAs can help with the cost of this.

If you're applying for DSAs for the first time (or are starting a new period of study), you'll have to make a contribution of £200 towards the cost of any computer.

DSAs can also pay for repairs, technical support, insurance or extended warranty costs arising from owning that equipment

Do I have to pay it back?

No. However, if you purchase equipment before starting your course and then fail to attend, you'll need to pay for or return the equipment.

How much can I get?

Full-time and part-time students can get up to £5,358 for the whole course. How much you can get doesn't depend on your household income, but does depend on your individual needs.

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.

The money will be paid directly 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 or note-takers) and other non-medical assistants you need to use to benefit fully from your course.

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Do I have to pay it back?

No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you'll have to pay back any payments you got after you left.

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.

How much can I get?

How much you get doesn't depend on your household income, but does depend on your individual needs. The table below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full time	Up to £21,305 a year.
Part time	A percentage of the full-time amount, depending on how intensive the part time course is, up to £15,978 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 directly 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.

- **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?

Full-time and part-time students can get reasonable spending on extra travel costs. How much you get doesn't depend on your income, but does depend on your individual needs.

Anything else?

The money will be paid directly to the supplier of the services (for example, a taxi firm) or into your bank account. If you're claiming using a 'Claim for reimbursement of costs through Disabled Students' Allowances' 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.

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- **General Allowance**

What's it for?

To help pay other course-related costs you may have as a direct result of your disability.

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, but does depend on your individual needs. The information below shows the maximum amount of help available for this year.

Full time	Up to £1,790 a year.
Part time	A percentage of the full-time amount up to a maximum of £1,342 a year depending on how intensive the course is.

Anything else?

The amounts shown are the maximum available. If you are asked to attend a Study Needs Assessment, the General Allowance can be used to pay for the assessment and any travel expenses for attending. If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability advisor at your university or college.

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 £10,652 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 individual needs. Usually, postgraduate students will not need to attend a new Study Needs Assessment if they have already had one when studying at undergraduate level.

Students on Postgraduate (or Professional) Certificate of Education (PGCE) courses can apply for the full package of DSAs awarded to undergraduate students.

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.

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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 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.

Job Centre Plus and your local authority's Housing Benefit section will take into account any Maintenance Loan (and some student grants) you're entitled to. The Special Support Grant and DSAs won't be taken into account.

For more detailed information visit www.gov.uk

How and when do I apply?

Apply as soon as the application service opens as the application process can take 14 weeks. The sooner you apply, the more likely it is you'll have everything you need ready for the start of your course.

- **Undergraduate Students:**

What to do and when to do it in 3 easy steps:

Step 1

You'll be asked if you want to apply for DSAs when you're applying for your main student finance.

Once you've applied for your main student finance you'll be able to apply for DSAs online. After you've submitted your application for DSAs you'll be told what evidence you need to send to support your application.

If you only want to apply for DSAs and no other type of student finance, you need to complete a DSA1 application form which you'll be able to download at www.gov.uk/studentfinance once the service opens.

You should apply and send your evidence as early as possible, the application process for DSAs can take around 14 weeks.

Step 2

Once you've applied for DSAs, you may be asked to arrange an appointment with an Independent Needs Assessor to find out exactly what equipment and support you need.

A Study Needs Assessment helps work out how they can support your needs during your time at university or college. It's not a test – it's your chance to have an informal chat with a specialist advisor about your disability and the impact it has on your studies.

During your Study Needs Assessment your assessor will work out what you need to help you get the most from your time at university or college.

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If you are asked to do this, you should book this assessment as soon as possible. To find your nearest approved Study Needs Assessment centre go to www.dsa-qag.org.uk

Step 3

It will be confirmed what specialist equipment and other support DSAs can pay for.

You will receive instructions for ordering any specialist equipment or arranging other support.

If your course nor your needs change, you should contact us as soon as possible.

- **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.

You can download the form at www.gov.uk/studentfinance.

- **NHS Funding:**

If you're getting funding from the NHS, you can visit the website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students for more information. If you're getting an undergraduate social work bursary, you should apply to Student finance England.

- **Research Councils:**

Students getting funding from research councils can visit the website at www.rcuk.ac.uk/skills/training 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 still get DSAs if you meet the eligibility conditions.

Useful Information and Contacts

Student Finance England

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

For everything you need to know about student finance, visit SFE's student finance zone on The Student Room at www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance

You can also phone on **0300 100 0607**.

(textphone: **0300 100 0622**) between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday, and between 9am and 4pm on Saturday.

Disabled Students' Allowances Quality Assurance Group

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.

Visit the Disability Rights UK website at www.disabilityrightsuk.org.uk.

Phone: **0800 328 5050** 11am to 1pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org.

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National Union of Students (NUS)

You can get more information from the NUS website at www.nus.org.uk.

Scholarship Search UK

Provides information about other sources of funding for undergraduates. Visit 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 Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 2pm on Saturday.

Visit the EASS website at www.equalityadvisoryservice.com.

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