



YorLinc Guide To Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

DSA provides additional support and funding to assist you whilst you study – this guide aims to give you all the information you need to apply for and receive DSA support, helping you through every step of the process!



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What is the DSA?



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Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) is available to students with a disability, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) and/or mental health conditions to cover the costs of services and equipment you require to succeed with your studies.

Unlike your other student finance loans, DSA is not based on household income and does not need to be repaid! The amount you receive is based on the challenges you face when studying and how much support you require – the DSA only covers costs that are incurred as a result of your disability/condition impacting your ability to study. You won't receive any grants directly, instead funds are sent to suppliers of your recommended support and equipment, making the process easy and straightforward for you!

DSA support is tailored to you as an individual and covers a diverse range of assistance from help with notetaking and assignment writing, to travel and mentor support. You will undertake a Study Needs Assessment to evaluate what support is relevant to you and the barriers you face when studying. Your Study Needs Assessor will create a report of the difficulties you are experiencing and the support they recommend to help overcome these challenges, but it is your decision what support is ultimately recommended and what strategies you feel will work best for you!

It is completely normal to feel overwhelmed when starting your DSA application but you are not alone in this process and we are here to help, starting with this guide and any future support you may need! Note: Whilst this guide aims to support students across the UK, eligibility criteria and support may differ across regions, and we recommend you explore the Student Finance Body in your area for more information.

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Eligibility



Eligibility



You may be eligible for DSA if you:

- Have a diagnosed disability, physical or mental health condition, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), or neurodiversity such as Autism or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Are studying in Higher Education – undergraduate and postgraduate courses that will last at least a year.
- Qualify for student finance and are a UK resident.

You may also be eligible if you are studying part time, or via distance learning courses.

If you are unsure if you are eligible, it's always best to check with your Higher Education Provider's Student Services or Wellbeing Team. Even if you are not able to apply for DSA, there may be additional support available to you via your university.

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How to apply



How to apply

You can apply for DSA online with just a few easy steps, but the process will differ depending on where you are with your higher education journey:

If you haven't applied for Student Finance yet you can apply for DSA within your main Student Finance application. You will be asked if you want to apply for DSA – simply follow the steps on the application form.

If you have already applied for Student Finance you can still apply for DSA by logging into your Student Finance account, accessing 'Your Profile' and select 'change your circumstances'. The DSA application may also appear in your 'To-Do List' on your account.

If you are not applying for Student Finance you just need to complete a DSA1 application form which you can access via: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-forms>.



Students outside of England will need to apply differently:

- **Scotland**

<https://www.saas.gov.uk/guides/dsa-guide/dsa>

- **Wales**

<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/part-time/tuition-fee-and-living-cost-students/what-s-available/disabled-students-allowance/#anchor-3>

- **Northern Ireland**

<https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/form-finder/> (You will need to choose your start date, find the relevant category i.e., Postgraduate or Undergraduate and then select 'Disability and Childcare Forms')

- **UKRI-funded studentship**

<https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/studentships-and-doctoral-training/get-a-studentship-to-fund-your-doctorate/>

- **Isle of Man**

<https://www.gov.im/categories/education-training-and-careers/student-awards/disabled-students/>

- **Channel Isles**

- Jersey - studentfinance@gov.je
- Gurnsey or Alderney - studentfinance@gov.gg

Essentially, the DSA application process is as follows:

1. Complete your DSA application

2. Submit evidence of your disability/condition

This could be a diagnostic report, a doctors letter or a Disability Evidence Form completed by a medical practitioner.

3. Receive your DSA1 letter

This confirms you can book a Study Needs Assessment. Your funding body will tell you how to arrange this.

4. Attend your Study Needs Assessment

This is where you chat to an assessor about what difficulties you experience when studying/accessing education and agree to support strategies you think will help you overcome these barriers. The assessor will then produce a report to send to your funding body outlining what support you require and why. You will also receive a copy of your report.

5. Receive your DSA2 letter

This confirms your support has been agreed by your funding body.

6. Arrange your support

Your DSA2 letter will tell you who to contact to arrange your recommended support. This is available to you the whole time you are studying and any equipment or software you receive is yours to keep!

Apply for DSA as soon as possible! You do not need to have started your course to apply and it can be useful to have completed your DSA application before the start of your first semester to have support in place before your studies begin, making sure you get off to a great start!

If you have been studying for a while, and are thinking about applying for DSA, you should be aware that the process can take several weeks so apply now to make sure your support is available for your upcoming assignments and deadlines!

Even if you do not have your evidence in place just yet for your disability or condition, you can still apply – getting the process started is the most important thing.

If you have multiple disabilities/conditions, make sure you share all of them that you are happy to disclose in your application, this will ensure you can gain support for all of your study related difficulties and not delay your support!

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Study Needs Assessment



Once your application has been approved by your funding body, you will receive your DSA1 letter that confirms you can book your Study Needs Assessment and will give you steps on how to do this.

Your Study Needs Assessment is your opportunity to discuss the difficulties you face when studying or accessing your education environment, and to find solutions and strategies to overcome them.

Whilst this assessment may seem daunting, it is important to remember that if you have got this far, your DSA application has been successful, and you are eligible for support – your assessor is there to help you determine what support is best suited to you. It is not a test, or a formal interview and you are able to request any adaptations that would make you more comfortable. For example, when booking your Study Needs Assessment you can request an online, phone or face to face assessment, as well as expressing a preference for a female or male assessor.

You don't need to pay for your Study Needs Assessment – and you can claim back any travel costs incurred to and from the assessment centre if you choose to have a face to face assessment.

Because of the detailed nature of the Study Needs Assessment, and the demonstrations and discussions of what support would be useful for you, the appointment can be long, but it is conducted in a relaxed and supportive environment and you are able to take breaks as and when you feel you need to! Generally, Study Needs Assessments take around an hour to complete, but this could be longer or shorter depending on your individual needs and how many disabilities/ conditions are being assessed.



The Study Needs Assessment will cover the following areas:

- Research and reading
- Writing and reviewing academic work
- Note-taking in lectures and seminars
- Managing time and organising work
- Access to and use of technology
- Practical sessions, placements, field trips and additional course activities
- Examinations and timed assessments
- Social interaction and communication
- Travel and access to your higher education environment
- Additional information

It is useful to think about what challenges you face in these areas before your assessment, and also consider what strategies have worked well for you previously to help you prepare for any questions your assessor may ask.

If you are concerned or anxious about any other elements of academic life that is not listed above, you can still ask your assessor if there is any available support. Even if it is not covered by the DSA, they may be able to signpost you to other organisations that can help.

DSA is available to support you with barriers to your academic life that are a direct result of your disability/condition. It does not provide any assistance with costs that any student would incur or general daily costs as a result of your disability/condition, such as prescriptions or mobility aids. Always ask your assessor if you are not sure if support is available.

Your assessor will complete your Needs Assessment Report and send this to SFE for their review. A copy can also be sent directly to your university's student services if you would like, but this is optional and you will be asked if you are happy for this to happen – remember that all of your information within the report is confidential and will only be shared with organisations with your consent.

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Your DSA Support



If Student Finance agree to fund all of the support recommended for you, you will receive a DSA2 letter (usually via email) confirming this.

If you need any support understanding your DSA2 letter, you can contact your university's student services or your assessment provider who can support you to understand who to contact next. However, the letter should be straightforward and will list your support into the following categories:

- **Specialist Equipment Allowance**

This includes any physical equipment and software you were recommended such as a laptop, microphone, headphones, printer etc.

- **Non-Medical Helper Allowance**

This includes the human support you have been recommended, such as a trainer to show you how to utilise your software effectively, a Specialist Mentor or Study Skills Tutor.

- **General Allowance**

This covers any costs that you have been recommended to be reimbursed for, such as printing expenses. The cost of your Study Needs Assessment is also paid for via this allowance.

There may be a different company to contact for each of the above categories to arrange your support, which can seem daunting, but the easiest thing to do is send a copy of your DSA2 letter to each one, and they will be in touch with next steps of how to arrange your support!

The final step in the DSA process is to arrange your support, receive your equipment and book in any NMH support sessions you have been recommended. Once you get started, which can always be the hardest step to take, you will see the benefit of your DSA support and be able to tackle all of your barriers to education and thrive at university!

If you do find it challenging or anxiety provoking to make the first step in contacting your support providers – remember that you can call, email, or in some cases where available use web chat, to contact these organisations, whatever the easiest method is for you!

At YorLinc Student Support we will do everything possible to make arranging your support as seamless and as straightforward as possible, we're here to help you succeed! Taking the first step in your application can lead to amazing support during your studies – contact us today to find out how we can help you!



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DSA Acronyms



AS	Autism Spectrum
AT	Assistive Technology
AY	Academic Year
ATSP	Assistive Technology Service Provider
CRN	Customer Reference Number
DEF	Disability Evidence Form
DSA	Disabled Students Allowance
DSA1	Letter sent by your funding body confirming your eligibility for DSA
DSA2	Letter sent by your funding body confirming the approval of your DSA funded support
HEP/HEI	Higher Education Provider / Higher Education Institute
HI	Hearing Impairment
MH	Mental Health
NA	Needs Assessment (Also referred to as Study Needs Assessment)
NAC	Needs Assessment Centre
NAR	Needs Assessment Report
NMH	Non-Medical Help
PG	Postgraduate
SLC	Student Loans Company
SpLD	Specific Learning Difference
UG	Undergraduate
VI	Visual Impairment

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FAQs



Is it worth applying for DSA?

It is always worth applying for DSA if you think you have an eligible disability/condition. You could be eligible for up to £26,948 funded support per year to assist you whilst you study.

This allowance supports students with varying diagnoses including, but not limited to:

- Physical disabilities
- Long term health conditions such as Fibromyalgia and ME
- Mental health conditions
- Specific Learning Differences such as Dyslexia and Dyspraxia
- Neurodiversity such as Autism and ADHD
- Blindness or visual impairments
- Deafness or hearing impairments

Do I have to provide evidence of my disability?

Yes, to proceed with your DSA application your funding body will need to see evidence of your disability/condition. This can be a letter from your doctor, a diagnostic report, or a Disability Evidence Form completed by a medical professional.

You can still apply for DSA if you are waiting to receive your medical evidence though, but you will not be able to have your Study Needs Assessment until it has been submitted and accepted by your funding body.

Do I need a confirmed place at university to apply for DSA?

No! You can apply for DSA whilst you are applying for your student finance, or as soon as student finance applications open, which is usually February/March. DSA support is not university specific, so it doesn't matter if you change your university or are going through clearing!

How long does the DSA process take?

From point of application to receiving your support, the DSA process can take several weeks to complete. There is no specific timeframe as it can depend on how long it takes you to apply, receive your medical evidence, delivery times of your equipment etc. Through each step of the application and assessment process, you should be given updated information on how long each step may take. However, the sooner you apply, the sooner you will receive and recommended equipment and services to help you succeed in your studies!

Is it too late to apply for DSA?

You can apply for DSA even in your final year of study! As long as you have assignments/exams remaining, you can apply for DSA support. It can take several weeks to process though, so apply as soon as possible to ensure you are able to receive support in time.

Can I choose my support providers?

If you have a strong preference regarding who you would like to provide your support, you are able to discuss this with your assessor during your Study Needs Assessment. They will take your preferences into account and recommend your favoured organisation where possible.

Do I need to reapply every year?

You shouldn't need to reapply for DSA every year if you are a full-time undergraduate, support simply rolls over each academic year!

If you are a postgraduate or a part-time student, or have not applied for Student Finance for tuition or maintenance loans, you may need to complete a new DSA form each year, but it is always worth checking with your funding body if you are unsure. You may also need to reapply if your circumstances change whilst you are studying to ensure you are accessing appropriate support; for example, if you develop a new condition, or your current condition gets worse.

Always contact your funding body if you make any changes to your course including suspending your studies, changing from full to part time, or changing your course end date as this may impact your DSA entitlement.

What do I need to bring to my assessment?

Your assessment centre should already have a copy of your DSA1 and your medical evidence, but it is useful to have this to hand just in case they are needed. If you are in your final year, it is useful for your assessor to have a list of any outstanding assessments, or any future resits so they can include this information in your report. Other than that, you don't need anything as you will just be talking about your academic difficulties and what strategies can be put in place to help!

What if I change my mind about support I declined previously?

If you decide after your assessment that support you were offered would in fact be useful contact your assessment centre and let them know you would like to reconsider. You won't necessarily need to have another assessment, though in some cases you may need to speak to your assessor again to discuss your needs further.

What is NMH support?

Non-medical Helper Support is an umbrella term for human support available to some students accessing DSA. There are various roles such as a Specialist Mentor, Specialist Study Skills Tutor, Assistive Technology Trainer, Specialist Support Professional etc., that provide individually tailored support for your own personal difficulties whilst you study.

For example, a student with dyslexia may face challenges with study skills, or a student with a mental health condition may lack motivation to attend their lectures. These NMH roles are designed to help students overcome the barriers to their education that their disability/condition causes, on a 1:1 basis, by supporting students to develop their own skills and strategies in a supportive, non-judgemental environment.

What do I do if I encounter any problems during my application?

There are lots of support options available if you come into any issues along the way with your DSA application – you can contact Student Finance directly, contact your student services via your university or Higher Education Provider, or contact us at YorLinc for guidance and information.



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