

# Into HE 2026

A guide to additional support in  
higher education

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## Investing in students with disabilities

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Sean Docherty is one of many Snowdon Trust success stories: He sustained a severe spinal cord injury in a mountain bike accident and spent seven months in Stoke Mandeville.

He went on to study for a Master's Degree in Medical Engineering at Cardiff University where our grants helped to pay for a room for his 24-hour carer.

Sean recently won a scholarship for a research PhD at University College London, developing new medical devices to help people manage life with spinal cord injuries.

“ The Snowdon Trust grants gave me the chance to achieve my goals and I hope my research at UCL will help others with spinal cord injuries. ”

**The Snowdon Trust assists physically and sensory disabled students to access vocational and academic courses by awarding grants.**

**Since launching in 1981, the first International Year of Disabled People, we have supported over 2,300 students to fulfil their potential through education.**

**We give awards where funding cannot be met through other channels.**

**Grants can be for equipment and essential study needs such as:**

- **computer equipment with adaptive software**
- **sign language interpreters**
- **note takers or library assistants**
- **powered wheelchairs and mobility equipment**
- **adapted or additional accommodation costs**

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You can find out more about the work of the Snowdon Trust and the types of costs that our grants can help cover at [www.snowdontrust.org](http://www.snowdontrust.org)

# Into HE 2026

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# Preface

Into HE is a guide for anyone with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability thinking about studying in higher education starting September 2026.

This guide aims to answer common questions such as whether colleges or universities will be accessible, how to choose a course and what support will be available. It also covers the student finance system and has up-to-date information on tuition fees, repayment methods and the support that will be in place for 2026 entry.



In the student stories, five people living with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability write about their own positive experiences, as well as any challenges they have faced, providing a valuable insight into what it's like studying in higher education. As well as taking advantage of the support on offer, the students talk about the importance of their own creativity, perseverance and motivation.

The guide also contains a useful resources section listing further websites, publications and organisations (education, health and disability-related) which you may find helpful.

We hope this guide will help you make the right decisions about going into higher education. It can be a highly rewarding and enjoyable experience, if challenging at times, and a valuable investment in your future employability.

For free information and advice for anyone living with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability, visit the Disability Rights UK website. The *Guidance & Resources* section of our website contains information about education, skills and employment:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

Higher education is a fantastic opportunity to study a subject you enjoy, taking your education to a higher level such as a Bachelor's degree, Foundation degree or higher apprenticeship.

Many people look back on their student days as among the best years of their lives; a time spent making new friends, joining clubs and societies and sharing ideas with people from different backgrounds.

There will be plenty of opportunities to enjoy yourself – from bars, clubs, theatre performances and concerts – as well as access to modern IT and laboratory facilities, sports centres, libraries and other resources.

It's important to think about the value of these experiences when weighing up tuition fee costs and student loans.

By going into higher education you're also making a calculated investment in your employability. In 2024, working age graduates had median annual earnings of £42,000 compared with £30,500 for non-graduates – a difference of £11,500 per year.

Having a higher education qualification is associated with better employment outcomes for disabled people. In 2019, research by the Office for Students showed that going to university almost halved the gap in the employment rate between disabled and non-disabled people, compared to those who only had GCSEs.

For some careers, such as nursing, law and teaching, you need to study a particular vocational degree. All of these professions can be made accessible for disabled people. Universities and colleges are required to consider reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can participate fully.



Lots of other employers simply look for degree level qualifications. For them it's not necessarily the in-depth knowledge of your subject that makes you more employable. Instead they value the transferable skills you develop in higher education such as communication, presentation, problem-solving and teamwork. For disabled people with limited work experience opportunities like course placements, internships and university partnerships with employers can all help the transition into employment.

Studying at university or college is different from being at school. Tutors can give you advice and guidance, but you will have less scheduled contact time with them than with teachers at school. In higher education it will be up to you to organise your workload and decide how much effort to make. However, this doesn't mean you can't get help with your studies.

Greater independence, including for some students leaving home and learning to live by themselves, can be a key part of the experience. The great advantage of higher education is that it provides a safe and supportive environment for this to happen.



Thinking early about what you want from higher education will help you decide whether to go, where to study and what kind of support you may need. Talking to a careers adviser at this stage could be very helpful.

Schools must make sure all Year 7 to Year 13 pupils receive independent careers guidance. This should help you understand the full range of education, training and employment opportunities, such as apprenticeships, supported internships or routes into higher education. The advice and guidance should be impartial and focused on your 'best interests'.

Schools must give you an outside perspective, for example through providing an external careers adviser, organising college and employer visits or using websites and helplines. Colleges can also provide careers advice and guidance.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 in England, local authorities should support all young people with special educational needs (SEN) or a disability to prepare for adulthood.

Discussions should focus on what you want to achieve and the best way to support you.

If you have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, your Year 9 review and every review afterwards must include a conversation about your future plans. This should include your education and employment plans, housing needs, social and health care, including at university.

Local authorities should help plan a smooth transition to higher education before your EHC Plan and support stops. When your course place has been confirmed, the local authority should ask your permission to share your EHC Plan so that staff can begin preparing support.

Each authority must also publish a Local Offer which sets out all the local services available to children and young people with SEN or a disability. It should include information on the support available in colleges and universities and how to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance. You should be able to tell the local authority whether the Local Offer meets your needs.

The National Careers Service provides careers advice through its website, online chat and a telephone helpline for everyone aged 13 and over. If you're aged 19 or over (or 18 and claiming an out-of-work benefit) you can also get face-to-face advice.

The website includes a section for young people with advice about going to college or university, apprenticeships and other learning routes.

[nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

Careers advice is also available from Skills Development Scotland (My World of Work) and Careers Wales.

[www.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk)

[www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)

# Fees and funding

There is plenty of support to lessen the cost of tuition fees and you don't need to pay for the course up front.

## ENGLAND

Publicly funded providers in England can charge up to £9,790 per year for full-time undergraduate courses. To charge the maximum, providers must be registered with the Office for Students (OfS) in the fee approved category, hold a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) rating and have an Access and Participation Plan approved by the OfS.

Other higher education providers can charge between £6,350 and £9,525, depending on their rating and whether or not they have an access agreement.

Although these figures can appear daunting, you don't need to pay your tuition fees up front. Even more importantly, you only start paying back your loan when your salary reaches a certain level. Many graduates will never repay the full amount before their loan is written off.

At the same time, you need to recognise that your student loan is something you'll be gradually paying towards for a long time, probably the majority of your working life.

### Loans for tuition fees

You can apply for a loan to cover your tuition fees in full. The loan is paid directly to the provider on your behalf, meaning you don't have to find the money before starting your course or while studying.

#### For more information

See the Student Loan Company (SLC) guides for 2026 entry, hosted at:

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)



### Loans for living costs

You can also apply for a loan for help with day-to-day living costs if you're a full-time student. The amount you can borrow depends on your household income, where you live and study, and your age.

New students aged under 60 at the start of their course and not living with their parents can get a maximum loan of £14,135 if studying in London and £10,830 if studying outside London. For students living at home with their parents the maximum loan available is £9,118.

### Loans for living costs aged 60 or over

If you're aged 60 or over at the start of your course, you can get a maximum loan of £4,582.

### Loans for living costs if you're entitled to benefits

You can get more support with living costs if you receive certain benefits such as Personal Independence Payment. The loan includes a maintenance element and a special support element. The special support element will be ignored as income for means-tested benefits.

New students not living with their parents can get a maximum loan of £15,415 if studying in London and £12,345 if studying outside London. For students living at home with their parents the maximum loan available is £10,757.



### Repayments

You start repaying your loan in the April following graduation and/or when you're earning over £25,000 per year. Above this level you pay 9% of your income. For example, if your salary is £30,000, you will pay 9% of £5,000 (£37.50 per month) taken through the income tax system.

Some other things to bear in mind:

- You'll repay the same each month whether you choose a course that costs £6,350 or £9,790.
- If you never earn more than £25,000 you'll never have to repay anything.
- If you start repaying but lose your job or take a pay cut, your repayments will go down.
- After 40 years any remaining debt will be wiped clear.

### Access agreements – financial support from providers

Publicly funded universities and colleges which charge more than £6,350 must have an Access and Participation Plan agreed with the Office for Students (OfS).

The Plan describes the measures that have been put in place to support students from low-income backgrounds and under-represented groups, as well as the financial help available for those students.

Each university offers its own scheme, but they generally include means-tested bursaries and scholarships as well as spending money on increasing access and outreach work.

Outreach work includes summer schools, mentoring programmes, after-school tuition, links with schools and colleges in disadvantaged areas and activities to improve retention and success. Check if there are any activities in your area.

## WALES

Tuition fee loans are available to cover the cost of fees which are set at a maximum of £9,790.

All students receive a £1,020 annual non-means tested maintenance grant. Students are also eligible for an additional means-tested maintenance grant. The grant amount is based on where you are living and studying and your household income up to a maximum of £10,685.

Students who do not receive the full grant can apply for a maintenance loan for the difference between their grant award and the maximum level of maintenance support (grant plus loan). These are as follows:

- £12,590 for students living away from home and outside London
- £15,720 for students living away from home and in London
- £10,685 for students living at home.

## SCOTLAND

The standard tuition fee in Scotland is £1,820. However, if you meet the residency conditions the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) will pay these fees. Scottish universities can charge up to £9,790 per year to students from elsewhere in the UK.

All eligible students can apply for a loan towards their fees and living costs. There are also various grants, bursaries and extra help to meet your costs as a student. For more information, contact Lead Scotland.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

If you live in Northern Ireland the maximum tuition fee at local universities is £4,855 (2025/26). This fee doesn't need to be paid up front. Universities in Northern Ireland can charge up to £9,790 per year from students from other parts of the UK. Students should check the UCAS website or contact the university or college directly.



All eligible students can apply for a loan towards their fees and students from lower-income households may be eligible for maintenance grants. Living cost loans are also available.

### Awarding authorities

#### If you currently live in England:

Contact Student Finance England. You should aim to complete your student finance application before June 2026 to be sure you have all your money when you start your course.

[www.sfengland.slc.co.uk](http://www.sfengland.slc.co.uk)

#### If you currently live in Wales:

Contact Student Finance Wales.

[www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

#### If you currently live in Scotland:

Contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

[www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

#### If you currently live in Northern Ireland:

Contact Student Finance Northern Ireland.

[www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)

## Patrick Mahaffey

BA (Hons) Global Politics and International Relations. Birkbeck, University of London

**After a major life-threatening event in my life several years ago, I recently completed a really successful first year at Birkbeck. My degree involves part-time study by evening classes over four years.**



In 2012, interested in the possibility of studying at university, I started searching online and made contact with the National Careers Service. I spoke with them regarding the different study options available. Having sustained a severe brain injury in 2007 and having spent two and half years, firstly in hospital followed then by a rehabilitation centre, I still have cognitive and physical difficulties. I was aware that I would I require support to complete a degree.

My next step was to attend a university fair. I spoke with representatives of several universities based in London. I identified that Birkbeck offered both a course that I was interested in, and a format of study that worked for me.

I made an application to Student Finance England to organise a study needs assessment at a university in London. After a detailed meeting with an assessor, I received a report outlining the range of equipment and

study support I would receive. This was paid for out of Disabled Students' Allowances.

My computer, software and other equipment was installed by an instructor who came to my home to show me how to use it effectively. I attended a meeting with a study skills tutor, whom I met with weekly, either on campus or via Skype from home. During these sessions we talked over suitable techniques to help negotiate my study difficulties.

I find the lengthy readings relevant to the course particularly hard. This was one of the reasons for me deciding to study part-time.

I have found the density of readings slightly more manageable than those required in full-time study. Additionally, I have a note taker to help capture the information that I find difficult to keep up with during the 50-minute sessions. I have been able to request extra time for exams if required.

“

*I found the application process much less complex than I had expected, and overall dealing with disability support workers has been a pleasure.*

Looking back at my first year of study at university, I am very happy to have had the opportunity to absorb all that I have learnt. Interacting with my classmates throughout the year has been very enjoyable. Generally, I found the application process much less complex than I had expected, and overall dealing with disability support workers has been a pleasure.

It's been a year of achievement, pleasure and growth for me and a springboard for the many exciting opportunities and challenges that I am ready to meet in the future.

# Flexible study options

If you don't want to study a three-year full-time course, there are a range of flexible options. Many courses, including foundation degrees and higher or degree apprenticeships, can be taken part-time. Modular courses allow you to work at your own pace, stopping for a while if necessary or switching to part-time. Distance learning is another option.

## PART-TIME STUDY

There are lots of positive reasons to consider part-time study. It may enable you to balance other commitments such as continuing your career or supporting your family. Studying fewer hours per week might make the course easier to access.

Many students simply prefer the flexibility that part-time study allows. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), part-time students made up around 14% of all undergraduates in the 2023/24 academic year.

Part-time courses usually have less of an impact than full-time courses on any benefits you receive such as Universal Credit. For more information about welfare benefits see Section 11.

## Loans for tuition fees

Publicly funded universities and colleges can charge £4,890 per year for part-time HE courses. Some charge up to £7,335 where they are Office for Students registered (OfS) in the fee approved category, have achieved a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and the OfS has approved an Access and Participation Plan. Some universities and colleges offer money back through bursaries.

Part-time students don't need to pay up front. If it's your first higher education course and you're studying at least 25% of the equivalent full-time programme, you can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover the cost of the fees charged by your university or college.



## Loans for living costs

Living cost loans are available for part-time undergraduate students, just as they are for full-time students. The amount you can get depends on the intensity of your studies, up to the following maximums:

- Living away from home and studying in London £14,135
- Living away from home and studying outside London £10,830
- Living in your parents' home £9,117

You start repaying your loan in the April following graduation and/or when you're earning over £25,000 per year.

If you study with the Open University (OU), you may be able to get a living cost loan if you're studying by distance learning because of a disability.

Part-time students can also apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) towards extra disability-related study costs. See Section 9.

### DISTANCE LEARNING

Open and distance learning courses allow a more flexible approach to studying. You study at your own pace. Most of the work is done from home, though you might occasionally go to an open learning centre or a residential seminar. Courses usually involve a range of media including the internet and TV.

The Open University (OU) is the largest open learning provider in the UK. The OU is the largest provider of higher education for disabled people with over 38,000 disabled students. The OU offers more than 250 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and professional qualifications. For a typical OU student, studying half the full-time equivalent, the fee was £3,892 per year in 2025/26.

A number of other colleges and universities also offer distance learning options.

### FOUNDATION DEGREES

Foundation degrees are employment-focused higher education qualifications. They aim to equip students with the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in the workplace. Designed and developed in partnership with employers, they therefore focus on a particular job role or profession and enable you to have professional and technical skills to further your career. You can study full-time, part-time, by distance learning or via the internet. They are a qualification in their own right, although you can progress to an honours degree or other professional qualification afterwards.

### DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Degree apprenticeships combine working with studying. Apprentices are employed throughout the programme, spend part of their time at university and the rest with their employer. Apprenticeships can be full-time or part-time.



# Choosing where to study

There are over 288 higher education institutions in the UK and a growing number of further education colleges which run higher education courses. These come in all shapes and sizes with many thousands of course combinations.

The best way to narrow down the field is to start by choosing a subject and type of course. Research into why some students leave university early has found that choosing the wrong course was an important factor.

It's essential to research and choose carefully. There are a number of good books and websites with information on choosing a course. You can find a selection of these in the Resources section at the back of this publication. You can search for courses on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website.

You may want to discuss your options with a careers adviser. If you're still at school or college, you could also talk to your teachers or tutors. Current and past students, family and friends can all be useful sources of advice.

The following are things all students need to think about and some are specific to people living with a health condition or disability.

## ENJOYING YOUR STUDY

Having a subject you enjoy is an important part of a successful experience of higher education. Vocational subjects and business courses are currently popular. Many subjects will be new to you and the combinations are worth investigating.

For example, did you know you could take a course in Psychology with Sports Studies, or Astrophysics with Music Technology? If you enjoy performing arts such as music, dance or drama, studying at a conservatoire could be the answer for you.

Concentrate first on what you want to study. Most subjects can be made accessible with the appropriate support. Don't be put off by people assuming you can't do something because of your impairment, disability or health condition:

- Visually impaired students take graphic design courses
- Deaf people study music
- People with dyslexia train to be teachers

## HOW YOU WILL STUDY

Some subjects involve more practical work, such as Veterinary Science. Others are more theoretical, for example, Philosophy. One French course may focus on literature and history and another on language and spoken French. The course you choose will determine whether you study more on your own or have more lectures and workshops to attend.

You might be assessed continuously throughout the course, have final examinations at the end of each module or year, submit a dissertation or have an oral examination. There may be different types of assessments, for example examinations, coursework, presentations, group projects or a combination of these.





Some courses include work placements ranging from two weeks' experience to a full year in industry. If you have significant support needs, you may need to plan how these will be met during placements. It might be helpful to discuss this with the programme leader and the provider's disability adviser.

Higher and degree apprenticeships provide an opportunity to gain a higher education qualification while working and training. Additional support in the workplace can be provided through the Access to Work scheme.

### COST

Course costs and the available financial support are likely to influence your final decision. It's worth remembering that you'll repay the same each month regardless of whether tuition fees are £6,350 or £9,790. Some universities have measures to support students from poorer backgrounds or give special financial incentives to students with higher A level grades.

### FEE WAIVERS OR BURSARIES

A fee waiver is a reduction each year on your tuition fees. This means you need to borrow less tuition loan. A bursary is some form of cash or gift in kind such as help with your accommodation.

If there is a choice and the amounts are the same, it may be best to choose a bursary. Bursaries provide cash to pay for daily bills which can reduce the immediate need for any other commercial bank loans or credit.

Fee waivers are a less certain benefit because you may never reach the point of needing to pay back the full amount of your loan. On the other hand, bursaries paid for living costs will be treated as income for any means-tested benefits you receive.

### ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

When deciding where to study, there are a number of academic factors to think about. For example, what are the best universities and colleges for your subject? Are you likely to achieve the UCAS points or qualifications they usually ask for? Is your choice of provider likely to influence future employers?

Check the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) rating for universities and colleges that you're interested in. The TEF provides information on teaching quality, the learning environment and student outcomes and can help you make an informed choice about where to study. Providers which participate can achieve a gold, silver or bronze rating.

However, bear in mind that:

- TEF ratings are for the provider as a whole, not individual courses. Not all courses offered by Gold-rated universities will be the best option, and providers with a lower rating may offer excellent courses or outstanding support in a particular area.
- TEF participation is voluntary. Some high-quality providers choose not to take part.

### For more information

Discover Uni can help prospective students decide whether, where and what to study. You can compare information and data for individual undergraduate courses across the UK. Including entry qualifications, progression rates, degree results, and the types of career and further study that students go on to. You can also find National Student Satisfaction results.

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk>

## LOCATION

You may want or need to be near your family and travel to university or college daily. Living at home will usually work out cheaper, although your living costs loan amount will be less. If you're a mature student you may have children, work and a mortgage to think about. On the other hand, you might want to move to another part of the country.

Some providers have buildings on a campus which means most facilities are on-site – libraries, lecture theatres, supermarkets, cafes and bookshops. Some students prefer to study in a city where the provider's buildings are often spread out. If you have mobility difficulties a campus university may be more accessible.

## ACCOMMODATION

Find out about the size, cost, location and accessibility of the rooms. If you intend to live in university-provided accommodation, ask if there are any limits on how long you can stay. You may want to get a guarantee of accessible accommodation for the duration of your course.

Find out what kind of accommodation is available; halls of residence, flats or rented housing.

Check if there are features you might need, such as:

- accessible rooms
- lifts, making sure there are no 'out of hours' restrictions
- adapted kitchens and laundry facilities
- appropriate safety and evacuation procedures
- flashing light fire alarms if you have a hearing impairment
- additional rooms available if you have a personal assistant.

You may also want to ask whether accessible rooms are located in a single block or spread out across the halls of residence.

## ACCESS TO THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

Find out whether buildings and facilities are accessible to you. Buildings you're likely to use include the students' union, bars, canteens, libraries, computer rooms, sports facilities, lecture theatres, teaching rooms and any departmental areas. If you have a hearing impairment, check if lecture theatres and teaching rooms have induction loops. You may also need to find whether there is parking for disabled people, good lighting and helpful signs around the university or college.

Don't be discouraged if some things aren't right. Talk to the disability adviser about your needs and discuss what adaptations can be made before you start.

## DISABILITY SUPPORT

Under the Equality Act, all universities and colleges have a duty to make reasonable adjustments so disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. All providers also have a student support or disability office, so you should be able to discuss how your individual needs will be met. Section 5 has more information on this.

You might want to go further and research individual university and college websites, social media pages and other materials to gain a better understanding of their support for disabled people. You could look at its Student Charter and whether it covers equality and diversity, health and welfare support and complaints procedures. You could also read the provider's Access and Participation Plan published on the OfS website.

The very best way to find out what a university or college is like is to visit it before you apply. It's an opportunity to see the facilities, explore the area and meet the course tutors. Alternatively, see if they have a virtual open day. This is discussed in Section 6.

## Hannah-Rebecca Joy Guscoth

BA (Hons) History of Art and Architecture.  
University of Reading

**I chose my course because it was something different and allowed me to learn a new subject. I live with Hereditary Multiple Exostoses, which is a medical condition affecting bone development.**



I had a challenging time at university because I happened to fall quite ill whilst at university. The disability department were brilliant. They were really helpful, gave me practical advice, lots of time and kept my lecturers informed about my health and effects on my study.

I used a laptop, Dictaphone, speech software, ergonomic equipment and I had note takers and library support. All of this help made it possible for me to study and really engage with my degree. I had an amanuensis in my exams, and a special room to conduct my exams. It took a lot of pressure off and meant I could take fewer painkillers during exams and think clearly when it counted. My disability support was funded by Disabled Students' Allowances, and it changed my degree!

In my second year my art history department had a compulsory study trip that would have been incredibly difficult for me to attend.

With the help of the disability department, we were able to get them to rewrite the module. This allowed me to continue the work and get the grades, but not struggle with the challenges of travel abroad. It was very rewarding because it felt like the department cared.

One of the worst experiences I had was having a member of staff ask me in my third year why I was using crutches. They should have worked it out by now! Instead of challenging them, I left it alone. I learnt not to assume everyone would know what support I needed, because three years into uni one staff member didn't even know I was disabled!

The most useful advice I was given came from my disability advisor – to accept help. I spent a lot of time saying that I wouldn't have this or that because I wanted to be like everyone else. However, she helped me realise that if I didn't take support, I wouldn't be like everyone else – I'd be worse off. She taught me that having different needs isn't a negative, and missing support only hurts me.

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*The most useful advice came from my disability advisor – to accept help. She helped me realise that if I didn't take support, I wouldn't be like everyone else – I'd be worse off ...*

This is advice I'd pass onto everyone else. Extenuating circumstances, extra support, extra time or whatever; it's really important to fight for it and take it if you're entitled. Not doing so just means you're not giving yourself the credit you deserve, or the chance to do your best.

# Disability support services

Universities and colleges provide a wide range of services for students that are separate from the teaching arrangements. These include money advice, accommodation, counselling, health and wellbeing centres, careers and employment advice and disabled student services.

In most larger providers, disability support services are on campus, are open all day and can be walk-in or by appointment. In smaller colleges disability support may be covered by staff in administrative departments, for example the Registry.

Disabled student services staff are responsible for delivering the university's commitment to equality. Universities and colleges are increasingly adopting inclusive teaching and learning strategies to ensure course design, delivery and assessment is accessible to students living with a health condition or disability.

Every year more people living with a health condition or disability consider higher education as an option and the processes to make sure they have an excellent learning experience are well understood and recognised by universities and colleges.

Many students go in and out of student services all the time so there's no need to worry about any stigma attached to using disability services.

You can get help any time during your course, including if you move on to postgraduate studies.

## HELP AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Disability services can help and advise you on applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and will arrange for any recommendations to be carried out.

For information about what DSA can cover and how to apply, see Section 9.

Not all adjustments require financial support through DSA. For example, extra time to finish your assignment and tutors providing handouts in advance and in alternative formats can be arranged through the disability adviser.

Disability advisers are trained professionals, and they have lots of experience working with students with all disabilities. They may have information about types of support and ways of studying that you might not have thought of before.

Examples include:

- **Technology** – specialist software such as mind mapping, speech to text, screen readers, Brain in Hand (which gives students access to support using their phone), voice recognition and 'lecture capture' technology which lets you listen to or view a lecture online;
- **Equipment** – an ergonomic chair, a fridge in your room to store medication and adjustments to doors;
- **Personal support** – someone to help you make notes, library support assistants, lab assistants, or specially trained staff to support you if you have a sensory impairment, for example a sign language interpreter or a mentor to support you adjusting to university life;
- **Study arrangements** – support with planning assignments, reading lists in advance, accessible study materials such as large print, braille e-books and audiobooks, extra time in exams or assessments and arrangements for field work or placements.



### PLANNING AHEAD

If you contact disability services at the universities or colleges you're interested in, they will send you information about how they organise support. It should be easy to find contact information on individual university websites. You can email questions to the disability adviser whilst you're finalising your choices. On Open Days you can usually arrange to meet with a disability adviser if you contact them in advance.

### WILL DISABILITY SERVICES KNOW ABOUT ME BEFORE I ARRIVE?

If you've shared your health condition, learning difficulty or disability in your UCAS application, disability services will be informed. Some universities contact you before you arrive, but at that stage they won't have detailed information about you.

They will invite you to discuss any support you might need and might request medical evidence. If you've not been contacted, you should think about making an appointment to see the disability adviser.

If you choose not to be open, they won't know you've got a disability. This is discussed in Section 8.

On the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) application form, there's a section which asks about your 'Consent to share DSA arrangements'. If you tick the box, disability services will be sent a copy of the letter confirming your eligibility for DSA. They can then help with the DSA process or contact you to make sure you're making progress with your application. If you agree, they will also be sent a copy of your DSA assessment report. This will help them to arrange everything as early as possible, for example booking a support worker to be in place at the beginning of your course.

You can find more information about the DSA process in Section 9.

### STUDY SUPPORT

Most HEPs will have a service to support students with writing and completing their assignments and assessments. These are usually based in the library or within the student services department and might be called the writing support team or study support services.

If you're uncertain about approaching disability services and getting support with your work, the study support service can be a useful starting point. Generally, support is provided in the format of individual tutorials, but these services usually offer seminars and workshops on how best to approach studying in higher education. They can also refer you on to more specialist support if required.

# Visiting universities and colleges

Visiting a university or college is the best way to find out what it's really like and help you decide where to go.

Most universities and colleges have Open Days when you can look around facilities including the library, student union and halls of residence, meet course tutors, speak to lecturers and ask questions. If you are unable to go in person, you may be able to attend a virtual open day which can include tours and videos, online Q&As with lecturers and students, webinars and talks. You'll need to register and book for open day events in advance. Dates are on university and college websites or visit the online directory of college and university open days across the UK:

 [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)


Another option is to go to UCAS Discovery events where you can meet staff from different universities, colleges and apprenticeship employers all at once. These are arranged around the country by UCAS. Their website has details of these events which are free to attend and take place March to July in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and August to October in Scotland.

Some providers offer taster courses, so you can experience academic and social life on campus, before applying for a place. These range from one-day to a weekend or even a week. You'll get the chance to meet staff and get hands-on experience of facilities, attend lectures, discussions and tutorial sessions. Taster courses can provide an important insight into how the provider works, the campus layout and potential adjustments which could be put in place. You can search for taster courses on the UCAS website.

If you have very specific needs, you should visit all the providers you're interested in.

It's better not to waste one of your UCAS choices by finding out that a provider is unsuitable after you've applied. Many universities and colleges welcome early, informal visits as they provide staff with an opportunity to discuss possible support arrangements with you. Your visit is not a selection day for the university or college to decide whether it wants to offer you a place. It's a chance for you to get information to help you decide whether you want to apply.

Many universities and colleges have made virtual tours and videos of their campus and facilities. You can find a list at:

 [www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/open-days-and-events/virtual-tours](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/open-days-and-events/virtual-tours)

## MAKING CONTACT

Contact the admissions officer or the head of department for your course. They'll be used to arranging visits and usually welcome enquiries from students living with a health condition or disability. The disability adviser can also help with disability-related questions. They may be able to arrange for you to speak to students on the course you're interested in as well as other disabled students. You may also be able to meet accommodation staff and try out the facilities in halls.

## DISCUSSING ISSUES

Tutors can discuss course options, how many assignments, lectures and seminars you'll have and the structure of the course. You can also talk to them about how your individual needs can be met and what kind of adjustments would be made so that you can access the course.

If you need flexible exam arrangements, talk about these as well. To make assessments more accessible, many universities and colleges will consider formats such as journals, logs, audio recordings or presentations instead of essays, and allow extra time for tasks.

The disability adviser should be able to tell you about the provider's services for disabled students, including accommodation and support arrangements. If they agree to adapt buildings or things on your course, ask them to put this in writing. Once your place is confirmed, check on progress and if possible, visit again to ensure changes meet your needs.

Ask the disability office or Students Union if they can arrange for you to talk to current disabled students. They can tell you first-hand about the support arrangements, level of work expected and any difficulties they've had.

### ASSISTANCE DURING YOUR VISIT

Let the provider know in advance if you will need assistance. The disability adviser should be able to arrange any support you need. This could include: a parking space, a map of wheelchair-accessible routes, information in large print, a sign language interpreter or other communication aid, or accommodation for you and your personal assistant.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A VISIT

#### Physical accessibility

- What's public transport like in the area?
- Are there clear signs around the town and the campus?
- What's the lighting like?
- Are all campus facilities fully accessible?
- How far apart are the buildings?
- Are there car parking spaces?
- How do I get a parking permit?
- Is there a campus minibus?
- Are all the buildings fully accessible? For example, are there wheelchair ramps, accessible lifts, toilets and stair lifts?
- Is there a choice of accessible accommodation?
- Can I live on campus for longer than one year of my course?
- What are the emergency evacuation procedures for disabled students?

#### Buildings you might use include:

- halls of residence, flats or rented accommodation
- kitchen and laundry facilities
- cafes and restaurants
- the students' union and bars
- the library
- sports facilities
- lecture theatres/departmental rooms

### Studying and exams

- How will my individual study and exam needs be met?
- What alternative methods of assessment will be available?
- How will my needs be communicated to lecturers or other staff?
- Are lecture recordings available in accessible formats?
- With some health condition and disabilities, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, you may need to ask if there is a room where you can rest.
- How has the university supported other students with a similar impairment?

### Other support facilities

- Are there any schemes whereby you can enrol early to get used to the campus and make sure all your support is in place?
- Is there a university health service or do students register with local GPs?
- What mental health and well-being services available on campus?
- Can someone help apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)?

You may find it helpful to take a copy of this checklist with you when you visit.

# How to apply

Most applications for full-time undergraduate courses go through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

UCAS applications are made online through the UCAS Hub. Once you've registered with UCAS Hub and confirmed that you would like to start studies in 2026, you'll be taken to a dashboard where you'll see a tile called 'Your application'. Click 'Start' to begin your application.

If you're currently studying, you can apply to UCAS through your school or college. Your school or college will give you a 'buzzword' so you can link your application to them. A member of staff can then add a reference, check your application and send it to UCAS on your behalf.

You can also make an application as an individual, getting your own reference and cutting and pasting this into your application. Either way, once you've registered, the UCAS Hub is easy to use and you can access it wherever there is an internet connection.

If you can't fill in the application yourself, ask someone to help type your answers. You can practice as much as you like, as changes can be made at any stage before you send your completed application. Your application will be automatically saved online and you can sign into your Hub to check it's progress. After that you'll be in control of communicating with your chosen universities. If you want a family member or support worker to give or receive information on your behalf, you can give them 'nominated access'.

You can choose to share some of your UCAS application details with your Student Finance company. See Section 2 for information on fees and funding.



The UCAS application allows you to choose up to five courses at different or the same provider(s). There is no preference order. If you're applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry you have four choices. In addition, you can make one further choice for a different degree subject.

You can apply for as many apprenticeships as you like, on top of your university applications. It's more like applying a job – positions can start at any time of the year.

UCAS charges £28.95 for up to five choices. It's advisable to use all your choices in case you're not accepted by your first choice. If you have been in receipt of free school meals at some point during the last six years (during your secondary education) up until the end of your final year, you will be eligible to have your application fee waived.



### DEADLINES

The general deadline for applying through UCAS is 6pm 14 January 2026 although late applications will be considered if there are still vacancies on the course. If you're applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry, or to Oxford or Cambridge, the deadline is 6pm 15 October 2025 for 2026 entry.

Your school or college is likely to give you an earlier deadline as this allows them to add things, such as references, check personal statements and choices.

### PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement is your chance to tell colleges and universities why you are a strong candidate for the course you want to study. Admissions staff want to understand your motivation for choosing the subject, how you have prepared for it and what you hope to achieve in the future.

UCAS has introduced a new format for personal statements. Instead of writing one long piece of text, you will need to answer three separate questions. This new structure is intended to help you focus your responses and make sure you include the information providers value the most.

Each question has a minimum character count of 350 characters, and the total upper limit is 4,000 characters (including spaces).

Look at course descriptions and identify the qualities, skills and experience required. This will give you an idea about what the university values most and can help you decide what to write about. The three questions you will be asked to answer are:

#### **1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?**

This is where you explain your motivation for choosing the course. You should describe what interests you about the subject and why you feel this is the right pathway for you.

#### **2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?**

Here you should focus on your academic preparation. This can include any particular subjects, topics or projects you have enjoyed as well as the key skills you have developed.

#### **3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

This question focuses on your wide preparation beyond the classroom. Think about the experiences that have helped shape you into the person you are. This includes interests, such as hobbies, work experience, volunteering, clubs and societies or positions of responsibility. Admissions officers are looking for evidence of character and achievement and you may be able to give examples of determination and initiative related to your health condition or disability.

If there are personal circumstances which have affected your educational performance, such as your health condition or disability, you should record these in the 'Extenuating Circumstances' section of the form.

If you're applying for an apprenticeship, you may be asked to submit a CV rather than a personal statement. Check the specific requirements for the apprenticeships you're interested in.

## REFEREE STATEMENT

This is a supporting statement from a tutor or a teacher, providing a view on your academic and personal suitability for a course. If you have not been in education for a while, some colleges or universities might accept a reference from another responsible person who knows you and your abilities, for example, a previous employer, volunteering supervisor or trainer. UCAS uses a structured reference format. Your referee will need to complete three sections:

### 1. Establishment details

This is a short description of your school or college. It helps universities understand the learning environment in which you studied.

### 2. Extenuating circumstances

If circumstances have affected your education or exam performance, your referee can record this here. This can include a disability or health condition, caring responsibilities, disrupted study or significant personal details. You might want to discuss with your referee whether or not you're happy for them to mention your disability and any personal circumstances that have affected academic work or achievements.

The advantages of sharing your disability are discussed in Section 8.

### 3. Other supportive information

Your referee can include factual statements about your academic progress, strengths, engagement with study and relevant skills. If you are currently studying for a qualification, your predicted grades are added here.

## MATURE STUDENTS

'Mature student' usually means a student who is over 21 when they start a course. Colleges and universities recognise that students who enter higher education later in life are usually highly motivated, bring valuable experience and contribute a lot to debates and seminars.



Whatever your age, if you don't have the usual formal qualifications, providers may look at other work or life experiences or qualifications gained through work or an Access to Higher Education Diploma. Check with the college or university you're interested in to see if these are acceptable.

### For more information

UCAS's website contains guidance for mature undergraduate students, including information and advice to those returning to study some time after leaving school.

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

The Student Room website includes video case studies of mature students and areas to share experiences.

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

## HOW DO PROVIDERS SELECT STUDENTS?

Most students are selected and offered a place on the strength of their written applications. Colleges and universities will look at qualifications you already have, including any AS results but the offer might also be conditional on future expected grades.

Some offers are based on the UCAS tariff, a system where points may be achieved from different qualifications such as A levels/ Scottish Highers, T Levels, BTEC National qualifications, 14-19 Diplomas, Advanced Apprenticeships and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Offers may be worded to ensure that applicants fulfil the minimum entry requirements. For example, it might state ‘88 UCAS tariff points, with at least 60 obtained from at least 2 A levels’. In recent years many universities have moved towards offers based on grades rather than points.

Conditional offers will be confirmed when your exam results are known. UCAS will send you each provider’s offer as soon as it’s made. If you get more than one offer, you will need to accept one as a firm choice. You can accept a second offer as an ‘insurance’. This is the choice you would make if you didn’t meet the conditions of your firm choice.

### INTERVIEWS

Whether you’re invited to an interview varies according to courses and providers. Often you’re invited to an interview if you’re applying for a competitive, health or education-related course or at selective university such as Oxford or Cambridge. To get to the interview and perform at your best you may want to arrange for help from your parents or other people such as a personal assistant or an interpreter.

Talking about your disability will enable tutors to ask questions about how best to make the course accessible and inclusive. Staff may need to adapt their teaching materials or methods to suit you such as using pastel rather than white backgrounds for PowerPoint presentations and providing handouts and presentations in advance. Be prepared to speak about potential problems and solutions. If you’ve managed well at school, you have good reason to say you will do well in higher education. Say what support you expect from the provider to help you succeed.

Discussions about your health condition, learning difficulty or disability are not part of the admissions process. Your application should only be judged on your academic ability and experience. Ideally, you’ll have already discussed this with the disability adviser.

If you’re invited for an interview:

- Read the prospectus so you can talk about the course and the provider
- Research the latest in your subject area
- Read through your application form – interviewers may ask you questions about the information you provided
- Prepare questions to ask the tutors
- Practice – have mock interviews with a tutor or careers adviser
- Be on time and look presentable
- Look presentable

### FITNESS REGULATIONS

On some courses such as medicine, nursing and teaching, you may have to meet ‘fitness to practise’ regulations set by professional bodies. These relate to health and safety requirements and the demands of that particular career. The process involves a health questionnaire and occasionally an occupational health assessment. However, no-one should assume that a disabled person can’t become a teacher or health professional.

Under the Equality Act, colleges and universities have to consider all possible reasonable adjustments as part of the ‘fitness’ assessment. They also have to support you throughout the course, including during any work placements in schools, health centres or hospitals.

### ADMISSIONS TESTS

Some providers will ask you to do admissions tests as part of their application process. These tests are designed to measure your ability to study at higher education level. You can find details of most admissions tests at:

 [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

You can also contact the college or university direct by phone or email. The results will be considered alongside your UCAS points and performance at any interview. If you're asked to sit an admissions test you may want to discuss your access needs with the provider's disability adviser.

### IF YOUR APPLICATION IS UNSUCCESSFUL

Universities and colleges don't usually give detailed feedback. However, they can't reject you because of your health condition or disability unless they can show that they can't meet your specific needs. They can only make this decision after they have considered all possible reasonable adjustments.

If you think you may have been rejected because of your impairment, contact the provider and ask for the reasons for their decision. If you believe you've been discriminated against you have the right to make a complaint. If the provider is unable to meet your needs, UCAS will allow you to substitute this choice for another one. If you receive rejections, try to remain positive. Other places and options are still open to you.

### IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OFFERS

If you don't take any of your offers, or if all your applications are rejected, you'll be eligible for Extra. This scheme allows you to apply for other courses with vacancies. You can apply for one course at a time through Extra on the UCAS website at no extra charge.

UCAS Extra runs between 26 February and 1 July 2026. You can't change your UCAS personal statement at this stage, but you can contact the university or college offer to send them a revised version instead.

### Clearing

UCAS Clearing is how universities and colleges fill spaces on courses that aren't yet full. Clearing runs from 2 July to 19 October 2026. Clearing vacancies are updated on the UCAS



website regularly, with the majority added from A level results day. As well as the UCAS website, official lists are also published in the Telegraph newspaper.

The only disadvantage is that, if you have complex support needs or require physical adaptations to buildings, it might be difficult to set up all your support before the start of the academic year. If you have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in England your local authority should maintain this through Clearing until you start university.

It's helpful to do some contingency planning before results day. Prioritise possible courses and universities so you can check against the Clearing listings when they're published. Check your UCAS Hub to see whether you've got a place. If you're eligible an 'Add Clearing Choice' option will appear on your screen.

### Other alternatives

You can call the Exam Results Helpline if your results are higher or lower than expected and you want to explore the options available, including resits, retakes and Clearing.

**T** 0808 100 900

You might also want to think about alternative courses or career paths that don't involve higher education and discuss these with a careers adviser such as employment, vocational routes and gap years.

## Duncan Kennedy

BSc (Hons) Mathematics – University of Birmingham

**I chose Birmingham because of how understanding their Asperger's support staff seemed to be at various Open Days.**



I also wanted to be close to home so I could go back for an evening or weekend to help ease the transition from school to uni. For my first few weeks I went home every weekend, not because of major issues but because I was just generally tired with all the excitement and settling into a new routine.

In the August before I started, the university let me and Mum stay overnight in the accommodation block. This helped familiarise me with the flat, as well as cooking my own food. I was also allowed to move in the day before arrivals weekend. This was particularly useful because I could unpack my things, put them where I wanted and settle in, without being in a busy crowd of people doing the same. This in turn made it easier for me to socialise with my new flatmates.

In Freshers' week there was a societies' fair. I looked at the list on the Guild website beforehand and chose which ones to join. This was so I knew where to go in the noisy, busy marquee where the fair took place. I joined the ballroom dancing society and video games society. I enjoy them very much and have made a few friends through them.

In preparation for Freshers' week, Mum and Dad told me how it's an ideal time to make new friends, and the kind of questions to ask people – like "Which course are you doing?" or "Where are you from?" I played drinking games and went clubbing for the first time in my life. I wasn't sure what I'd make of it, but I went along and enjoyed it, even though I was always the first to leave.

Over the year, I became friends with my flatmates. We often go to the cinema or student plays together. When I told them I had Asperger's, the response was positive and they accepted me as I am.

I get funding through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for a special pen and paper called a livescribe that can record lectures, a laptop to play back the recordings, a student mentor and weekly meetings with a mentor who has specialist Asperger's training.

“

*All of this has been instrumental to my success so far. Overall, my first year as a student has been a resounding success.*

DSAs also cover the difference in cost between en-suite and non-ensuite-accommodation, because I find things easier in my own private space. All of this has been instrumental to my success so far.

The student mentor played a key role in helping me settle in at the start of term. The equipment and notetakers have been very useful with revision, especially playing back excerpts from lectures about the topics I find hard. In exams I was given 25% extra time and a separate room, with other students who have similar arrangements.

# Being open about your disability

You might be unsure whether to be open with the university or college about your health condition, learning difficulty or disability or wondering about the best time to do this. It can be helpful to think about what you expect to happen. Colleges and universities sometimes describe the process of telling them about your impairment as ‘disclosing a disability’.

Some students are happy to be open about their disability because they had support at school or college and they know they want similar support in higher education.

The UCAS application is an early opportunity to do this. The personal details section includes a mandatory question asking if you have a physical or mental health condition, long-term illness or learning difference. You can choose a disability category and provide more information in a free text box if you wish. You can also mention your disability in your personal statement answers, particularly if you can present it in a way that shows evidence of character and achievement.

Universities and colleges should give you further opportunities to be open about your disability throughout the admissions and induction process and during your course, for example in the run-up to exams or before you start work placements. Whenever you choose to tell the university you should contact the disability adviser in student services.

If you have a visible disability but feel uncomfortable about putting personal or medical details in your UCAS application, you can wait until you receive an offer and then contact the university or college Disability Service. If you have a less obvious disability, you may wonder if it's safer just to keep everything private.

Some people worry that the university or college might act in a discriminatory way and that admissions staff might deny them a place.



Others don't feel that their situation counts as having a disability, don't see it as having any effect on their ability to study, or simply don't like being labelled in this way.

There's no clear-cut answer as to whether or when you should tell people about your disability. You need to use your own judgement about what's best for you. However, this section has some information worth considering.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Universities and colleges have been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act since 2001 and the Equality Act since 2010. This means they have well-developed systems and procedures for admitting disabled students and making sure they progress in their studies. It would be unlawful for them to refuse you a place or treat you less favourably because of your disability.

Providers are expected to show commitment to widening access and deliver a better learning experience for students to justify the increasing fees and the implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This may be the first time you've had to think about being open about your disability. However, the university will have had many disabled students through its doors and are likely to have experience of supporting students with a similar disability.

### YOUR ENTITLEMENT TO DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE (DSA)

DSA is not a welfare benefit. Don't be put off telling people about your disability and claiming DSA because you think it means you can't manage your studies. See Section 9 for information about DSA.

The definition of disability is very broad and can include specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health conditions, such as depression. You might feel that your needs are not as important as, for example, someone in a wheelchair.

However, disabilities affect learning in different ways and the disability adviser will be able to help you decide. You don't have to accept the word 'disability' as a label, but it can be used as a way to get support.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Research shows that disabled students who receive DSA get better final grades than those who choose not to ask for or accept support.

Studying in higher education is very different from studying at school. The university or college should provide you with a course handbook that outlines the study areas and assessments. This will give you a better idea of the demands of the course and help you decide whether to ask for support.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about your disability is protected by the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. It is classed as sensitive personal information and cannot be shared without your permission. Universities and colleges have policies outlining which members of staff will be told about your disability. With your agreement, this might include the disability adviser, your personal tutor, exams officer and individual lecturers.

### STAYING IN CONTROL

If you decide when to tell people about your disability, you'll have more control over the way it's seen. Take advantage of any opportunities to describe your disability in a positive way. Your experiences may have provided you with skills that are useful for the course or vocational area you've chosen.

### INTERVIEWS AND ADMISSIONS TESTS

You may need additional support to attend an interview or sit an admissions test, such as a reader or adapted computer. Ask for this well in advance to give the university time to make arrangements. Some courses, for example those linked with professional qualifications such as teacher training, medicine and nursing require you to provide health information during the admissions or registration process. These checks are to do with health and safety requirements and the skills and abilities you need to carry out certain professional roles.

The types of changes that can be made to enable disabled people to do each job must be considered as part of the assessment.

### ADJUSTMENTS CAN BE PUT IN PLACE EARLIER

The earlier that you tell people about your disability the easier it will be for adjustments to be put in place in time for the start of your course. If you decide not to tell the university or college, you may end up facing a lot of challenges in the first year on your own.

# Disabled Students' Allowance

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) can cover extra study-related costs that you may incur due to your disability. It isn't a loan so it doesn't need repaying and the amount you can receive depends on your individual needs and not your income.

## WHAT CAN DSA PAY FOR?

DSA can pay towards specialist support you need on your course. A maximum allowance of up to £27,783 per year (excluding travel) is available to full-time and part-time students.

They are designed to cover extra disability-related costs through four main areas of support:

**1: Specialist equipment** such as computers, assistive software, audio capture equipment, multifunction printers/scanners and other equipment. Funding is not generally available for standard size monitors or keyboards and standard mice unless part of a recommendation for a desktop computer. You'll have to pay £200 towards the cost of a new computer if you need one to run any recommended assistive software. Don't buy equipment before authorised by your funding body, as reimbursements are not available.

**2: Non-medical helper's support** such as specialist notetakers for deaf and visually impaired students, communication support workers, assistive technology training, sign language interpreters, specialist mentors, specialist one-to-one study skill support and other non-medical helpers.

**3: General support** such as the cost of the DSA needs assessment, a fridge for medication and the extra costs of specialist accommodation for example, en-suite facilities needed because of your disability. However, if the accommodation is managed by your college or university or one of its agents, they must fund this.

**4: Travel** to cover extra travel costs you have because of your disability. You won't get all your travel costs paid but, for example, if you need a taxi to get to the campus instead of using public transport, you will get the difference between the two fares. Travel costs are not included in the DSA maximum cap, so in effect they are uncapped. In Scotland there is no DSA for travel but you may get a separate allowance towards transport costs from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.



## ELIGIBILITY

All full-time undergraduates are eligible, as long as the course is a 'designated course' (most courses of higher education and many foundation degrees at publicly funded universities are designated). Part-time students are eligible as long as they're studying a designated course which is at least 25% of the full-time equivalent each year. Open and distance learners in the UK are entitled to support as long as the course meets eligibility conditions.

Full-time and part-time postgraduate students are also eligible, up to a maximum allowance of £27,783 per year (excluding travel). International students are not eligible.



**APPLYING FOR DSA**

Once you've decided to apply for DSA, there are several steps before you receive your equipment and support, and you will need to take an active role in the process. This will be explained to you in letters from your Student Finance company.

You don't need to have a confirmed place at university before you apply. It's best to apply early in the year so you have time to respond to any letters and emails before the summer holidays. You can usually apply online for DSA at the same time as making your main application. The application for DSA should be on your 'to do' list. If it isn't, select 'change your circumstances' to apply.



**Who to apply to****In England:**

Apply to Student Finance England. For NHS-funded courses apply to NHS Student Bursaries.

-  [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim)
-  [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary/disabled-students-allowance-dsa](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary/disabled-students-allowance-dsa)


**In Wales:**

Apply to Student Finance Wales. For NHS funded courses, contact the Disability Service at your university directly to make an application. The University will liaise directly with NHS Wales.

-  [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)
-  <https://nwssp.nhs.wales>

**In Scotland:**

Apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for any course.

-  [www.saas.gov.uk/guides/disabled-students-allowance](http://www.saas.gov.uk/guides/disabled-students-allowance)

**In Northern Ireland:**

Apply to Student Finance NI.

-  [www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)

If you're applying for student finance by post or if you don't need student finance, you can apply by completing a DSA1 paper form. You can download the form from the websites listed below.

Before applying, it can be helpful to have an early discussion with the disability adviser. Colleges and universities are expected to provide support as part of their duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equality Act 2010. They have direct responsibility for providing certain types of non-medical help, such as readers, scribes, proof readers, practical and library support assistants. The disability adviser can help you complete the application form for DSA if needed.

You'll need to submit medical evidence of your disability to your Student Finance company. This can be a diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty, or a letter from your doctor or consultant stating the nature of your condition, ideally briefly explaining how it affects you. If you have an EHC Plan in England, this can also support the diagnosis and be used to indicate the areas where you need support. If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you will need to send your dyslexia diagnostic assessment – which tells you about your own learning profile. If the diagnostic assessment was carried out after 2011, the psychologist must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Depending on your contact address, your application will then be assigned by Student Finance to a company called Study Tech or Capita who will be your single point of contact for your needs assessment, assistive technology and training needs.

Student Finance will email you a DSA1 notification confirming eligibility for DSA and introduce the company assigned to you.

### Needs assessment

If you ticked the 'consent to share' box on your application form, you will receive an introductory email from either Study Tech or Capita with a link to register on their system and start the needs assessment booking process. If you have not provided consent to share, you will be given instructions on how to contact the assigned company.

Some students worry about what the needs assessment involves, especially if they've had a previous assessment where their voice wasn't heard. However, the needs assessment for DSA is not like this. Its purpose is to ensure you have the best possible opportunity in higher education to show your abilities and achieve your goals.

You can choose to attend the needs assessment in person or remotely via a video call, specifying any special requirements that you need to access the assessment, for example, a BSL interpreter. The needs assessor will discuss your course and identify areas where you might benefit from support, for example, using computer technology. They might talk to you about different equipment and software and discuss its features.

Assessors are experienced in the range of equipment and human support available and will help you decide what's best. They will write a report detailing recommendations for support. This report will be sent to Student Finance and a copy to you if you wish. The assessor doesn't make the final decision on what you're entitled to. The report may also identify areas where support is needed but falls outside the scope of DSA. You could share this with your college or university and use it as a basis to discuss reasonable adjustments.

If you don't book and attend a needs assessment, Student Finance can't process your DSA application.



### GETTING SUPPORT IN PLACE

Once Student Finance has approved the package of support, you will be notified via a DSA2 entitlement notification. Your assigned company (Study Tech or Capita) will contact you about next steps for delivery and set up of equipment and the necessary training agreed. The DSA2 notification will also explain how to access other agreed support, such as non-medical help and travel support.

To ensure everything is ready for the start of term, it is important to complete these steps as early as you can.

You can ask Student Finance or your first-choice university for advice at any time. They are aware that it may seem a bit daunting and are experienced in helping students through the process.

#### For more information

The Disability Rights UK student helpline can provide further information about DSA and how to complain if you have any problems with the assessment process.

**T** 0330 995 0414

**E** [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## Tegan Rawlinson

BSc (Hons) Chemistry, University of York

**I have dyslexia and multiple medical conditions, including asthma and a condition called Allergic Broncho-Pulmonary Aspergillosis, all of which affect me daily.**



Studying chemistry at university, away from home, is a scary thought in general. Trying to tackle my degree, social life and my disability was totally terrifying. However I needn't have worried. All the support I needed was here. I knew that chemistry was going to be very demanding in terms of contact hours, but I knew my passion for the subject was not going to be stopped by my disabilities.

The first thing I did was apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) which enabled me to have a reader and writer in exams, any extra books I needed and gave me specialist equipment which helps me do my work.

When I decided York was my first choice, Disability Services and the Chemistry department's disability adviser contacted me. Disability Services were really helpful with sorting out the forms I needed to fill in. The Chemistry disability adviser has helped in many ways; printing my handouts on green paper, releasing them early and telling staff about my extra needs.

I feel comfortable explaining problems, knowing they will try their best to sort it out.

The department has been amazingly supportive and I've been given the help I need. For example; no one marks my spellings in my work, in exams I have a reader and writer and the demonstrators in labs are aware that I might need more help. Another main help is my supervisor, who I know well and is always ready to help me. All of this support is amazing but it does require effort. It won't just come to you; you have to be honest and ask for it when you need it.

I can't drink due my medication. This worried me as I wondered how others were going to accept this. I really shouldn't have worried about this because I found that everyone just accepted it. You don't need alcohol to have a good time.

As I take longer to do all my work and get tired more, I knew joining multiple societies and attending regularly wasn't going to work. I tried out a few at the beginning and chose Cassoc (Catholic Student Society). Here I made lifelong friends and I'm the press and publicity rep.

“

*I have grown in confidence, not just in my subject but within myself. I have learned to deal with my disabilities knowing the support is there for me. A disability is no reason to hold back.*

It's not all plain sailing. I found it hard constantly explaining why I use green paper, wear green glasses and take medication during lectures. However, since finding my close friends it doesn't matter – they just accept it and I no longer feel embarrassed.

# Personal care and support

Personal care and support is the practical help you need for your daily life. For example; support with cooking, using the toilet, washing, dressing and taking medicine. At university or college, you may also need assistance with tasks such as cleaning, correspondence, shopping and transport in order to remain independent.

Organising personal care when you go to university or college can be complicated. You should start making arrangements as early as possible. If time is tight, don't worry. It's still possible to get the right support but you'll need to take some proactive steps. This includes letting your local authority know you're planning to go to university or college and contacting disability services at the places you're interested in.

## FUNDING PERSONAL CARE

Disabled Students' Allowance (Section 9) only covers education, not care costs. When you go to university your care package should be funded by the local authority where you're 'ordinarily resident', which normally means the local authority area you have the strongest links to. You can't be 'ordinarily resident' in two areas. For many students this is the area they come from. This might be because they plan to go home at holiday time, have friends and family living there, and intend to return after graduating.

## THE PROCESS

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, young disabled students with education, health and/or social care requirements can ask for an assessment of their needs. Local authorities in England must carry out an assessment and prepare an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan for those who need one. If you have an EHC Plan you can request a personal budget. This will give you greater choice and control about how you buy your support whilst studying and who you choose to provide the service.

If you're not eligible for an EHC Plan, you may still be eligible for an assessment from your local authority Adult Social Care Department under the Care Act 2014. Young disabled people should already have a transition plan which identifies the most appropriate support systems to meet your needs and aims.

You can ask adult services for a Child's Needs Assessment (CNA) at any time before your 18th birthday if you're likely to have care and support needs from age 18. This gives you an indication of the care available and your likely personal budget to help you plan ahead. Local authorities should also use these assessments to help them plan the support that they will provide while you're in higher education.

If you're considering personal care for the first time, contact your local Adult Social Care Department. You can ask for an assessment of your care and support needs (carried out by a trained assessor or social worker). The assessment of need covers six areas: personal and social care, health care, accommodation, finance, education, employment and leisure, transport and access.

If you're eligible for support, you'll be offered a personal budget which can be managed in different ways:

- direct payments (cash instead of services)
- your local authority manages the budget
- a third party manages the money.

You can have input into all of these. The most important thing is for you to have choice and control over the services you receive.

### Moving to a new local authority

If you receive personal care and move permanently to the area where you're studying, the Care Act 2014 provides for 'portability or continuity of care'. This means your care and support should continue when you relocate to another local authority area until the new local authority completes its own needs assessment. Local authorities have a legal duty to meet national criteria which set minimum thresholds for care and support, and follow Care and Statutory Guidance on charging if they require contributions to the cost.

You may choose to return home for holiday periods and maintain your ordinary residence status. Either way you'll need to ask for a review of your services.

### ORGANISING YOUR SUPPORT

If you require personal care, think about what you need over a 24-hour period: during lectures, seminars, library periods, free time outside of learning and any night time support. Make sure to include any other weekly or monthly support you need. Also consider where you'll spend vacations. Keep a diary for a few weeks to record your daily needs and the difficulties you have carrying out personal tasks and daily activities.

Once you've established your local authority and how your personal care will be funded, you should be offered an 'indicative budget'. You'll then need to write a care and support plan either independently or with assistance – some local authorities offer independent support planners. Your plan will need to demonstrate how you'll meet the outcomes you want and be signed off by the local authority.

You should be given a choice about managing your personal budget. If you choose direct payments you'll have more flexibility. You could become an Individual Employer and employ your own personal assistants.

This comes with certain responsibilities, such as dealing with tax and national insurance, but lots of support is available.

Alternatively, you could contract with a domiciliary care agency. Either way a local Disabled People's Organisation will be able to help you decide what's right for you.

Universities and colleges providing personal care, as well as domiciliary agencies, offering personal care in a student's home or temporary residence, must be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – you can check the CQC website for up-to-date information on the quality of their services.

If you choose direct payments and decide to be an Individual Employer, the Skills for Care website has an excellent range of resources to help you recruit personal assistants. Many areas across the country provide Personal Assistant Registers, listing people who are interested in personal care roles and available for work.

#### Volunteering Matters

This national charity recruits full-time volunteers to help disabled people live independently in the community. Student Choices is their service for disabled students who need help at university or college. Volunteers are often recent graduates or planning to go to university, so they have experience of or an interest in higher education. A staff member at the university acts as a supervisor.

<https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk>

#### OTHER LOCAL SERVICES

Register with a local GP as soon as possible, particularly if you have health related issues that need monitoring. The disability adviser at the university or college may be able to help coordinate support and refer you to local services that can help with personal care. You can find information about registering with a GP at:

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

# Other financial help

In addition to the financial support described in Sections 2 and 9, there are a number of other sources of help available.

## ADULT DEPENDANTS' GRANT

If you're studying a full-time course and have a partner or another adult who depends on you financially, you may be entitled to an Adult Dependants' Grant. The maximum amount available is £3,545 per year. Contact your awarding authority for more information.

## CHILDCARE GRANT

In England and Wales, full-time students with children in registered childcare can apply for a Childcare Grant. The grant pays 85% of actual costs up to a maximum of £199.62 per week for one child and £342.24 per week for two or more children. Contact your awarding authority for more information. In Scotland you can apply for help from the Higher Education Childcare Fund. Lone parents can apply for an additional grant from SAAS.

## PARENTS' LEARNING ALLOWANCE

Full-time students with dependent children may be able to apply for help with course costs such as books, materials and travel. The amount you can receive depends on your household income. The maximum allowance is £2,024 per year.

## HARDSHIP/DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

Each UK country has its own schemes for supporting students facing financial hardship. Priority is usually given to part-time students, students with children, especially single parents, mature students, disabled students and care leavers. The funds can sometimes be used to pay for diagnostic assessments for dyslexia or the £200 contribution towards laptops recommended through DSA. Contact student services at your university or college for details of how to apply.

## DISABILITY AND WELFARE BENEFITS

Most full-time higher education students can't claim welfare benefits. However, students who get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) may be able to receive more support with living costs than other students. It's important to tell the Benefits Agency, Jobcentre Plus and other relevant agencies that you're starting a course as this counts as a change of circumstances. For individual advice it's best to speak with a welfare rights specialist in the student money advice team at your university or college or try your local Citizens Advice Bureau.



## Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP has replaced Disability Living Allowance for people between the ages of 16 and 64. PIP is a non-means tested benefit for people who need help taking part in everyday life or find it difficult to get around. It is always paid on top of other benefits.

### For more information

Disability Rights UK publishes *Personal Independence Payment – A guide to making a claim*, free to download from:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/personal-independence-payment](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/personal-independence-payment)

### UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal Credit is a benefit available across the UK, replacing working age means-tested benefits. Most full-time students are not eligible for Universal Credit, but there are some exceptions. For example, you can claim Universal Credit if you have been assessed as having a limited capability for work before starting full-time study and receive PIP.

If you have not been assessed as having a limited capability for work before starting full-time study, the DWP will refuse your Universal Credit claim.

Higher education students eligible for UC will usually be placed in the 'no work-related requirements' group for the whole academic year.

### CHARITABLE TRUSTS

If you have extra disability-related costs which can't be covered by statutory funding or other sources, you could try applying to a charitable trust such as the Snowdon Trust. The Snowdon Trust grant scheme helps students with a physical condition, long term illness or learning difference and can make an award of up to £5,000 in one academic year.

[www.snowdontrust.org](http://www.snowdontrust.org)

#### For more information

See Disability Rights UK's factsheet called *Funding from charitable trusts*. You can find it, and other information on studying and claiming benefits in the *Resources & Guidance* section of our website:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources)



# After you arrive

The first few weeks at university or college are usually very exciting and can also be a little nerve-wracking. It's good to allow yourself some time to settle into a routine. Sometimes there are practical difficulties, but these can usually be resolved without too much trouble. If you do experience any difficulties, remember disability services are there to help you.

When you first arrive at university or college there'll be lots of exciting opportunities to meet people and get to know your surroundings, often as part of a special 'Freshers' Week'. It can take a few weeks to get into a routine and you might need some time to get used to working with any interpreters, guides or volunteers.

Similarly, it may take a while to learn to use any new equipment. If you need training on the equipment or help setting it up, this can be paid for by DSA.

It's important to remember that teaching and learning in higher education can be very different from school or college. Teaching staff may not immediately adapt their teaching styles enough to meet your needs. They may forget what you need or be unsure what to do.

Try to establish relationships with staff on your course early on such as your personal tutor or the programme administrator. If you don't feel confident about approaching academic staff yourself, ask the disability adviser to speak to them for you.

## INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The government emphasises that providers should ensure courses are accessible to a diverse study body. This includes not only physical accessibility of buildings but also the teaching methods that are used.

Many institutions are adjusting their teaching approaches. For example, teaching staff may

be able to give you handouts for lectures and seminars in advance. Often these will be made available on the university's virtual learning environment (VLE). This means you can do the required reading and studying before the teaching has been delivered. It also allows you to manipulate materials into the format which best suits your learning preferences. Some universities and colleges also record lectures and make these available to all students after the teaching session has been delivered.

## LEARNING SUPPORT PLANS

Most providers will have a system in place to identify and document your individual needs. These are usually referred to as Learning Support Plans (LSPs) or Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). Similar to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you may have had at school or college, ILPs/LSPs outline the support you'll receive such as adjustments to exams or support in the classroom, such as note takers.

ILPs/LSPs are usually written and implemented by disability service staff in your higher education provider (HEP). In some HEPs, there are also staff based in academic departments who take responsibility for implementation. These staff vary between HEPs and may be your personal tutor, your head of programme or another designated member of teaching or administrative staff.

It's important to find out what system is in place at your institution and don't just assume the LSP/ILP will get fully implemented. You will need to be proactive if you want to get the most out of the support which is available.



### ASSESSMENTS

Under the Equality Act, institutions must make reasonable adjustments to their assessment processes so that disabled students aren't disadvantaged. Adjustments might include alternative methods of assessment, flexibility with deadlines, or providing special equipment and other support. These arrangements are usually made through the disability adviser liaising with academic staff.

Different courses have different expectations when it comes to fulfilling course assessments and the types of adjustments they can make. If you previously had support at school or college, it's important to clarify if the approach will differ at this level. Some professional courses such as nursing or law have strict assessment protocols, which require you to demonstrate that you can meet specific 'competencies' to enter that profession. It's worth having a conversation with course staff to discuss the range of adjustments available.

### PERSONAL SUPPORT

Since 2016 funding for some types of support (such as non-specialist note taking) has been removed from DSA. However, if you require this support to access your course equitably, then it can be provided as a reasonable adjustment by your HEP.

DSA does not cover costs for extra academic tuition or subject specific coaching. HEP's are responsible for meeting costs arising from these activities as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. However, if you require specialist one-to-one support, like mentoring or study skills tuition related to your specific learning difficulty, this can be paid for through DSA. For example, a specialist mentor can help you with study related issues such as organising your time, dealing with problems which arise on your course and becoming more familiar with studying at this level of education.

When you know your timetable of classes it's important that you tell your support workers promptly. This will make sure that everyone is in the right place at the right time. If you find you can't attend once an appointment is booked, you must cancel it in advance.

### YOUR HEALTH

If your disability affects your health, your academic work, providers should make adjustments for you, such as notes for any study sessions you have missed or alternative arrangements for assignments and exams. Talk to your tutor or the disability adviser if you start to fall behind. Don't wait until it becomes a big problem.

### OTHER SUPPORT

Some providers have disabled students' groups or societies, where you can speak to other students and share your frustrations. Most Students' Unions have a welfare officer who can give advice or act as your advocate. Counsellors can be helpful if you want to talk through issues with someone.

### COMPLAINTS

As the stories in this guide show, most disabled students have positive experiences in higher education. Most providers have excellent support arrangements and any difficulties can be quickly resolved.

Occasionally things don't work out as they should. If you have a complaint, the first step should be to contact your tutor and/or disability adviser and try and sort things out informally. If this doesn't work, you would then need to follow the provider's internal complaints procedure and make a formal complaint.

If you go through the internal process and you're still not happy with the outcome, you can take your complaint to The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) in England and Wales or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in Scotland. In rare cases, difficult situations are not worked out at the university level and students may choose to get legal advice.

### THE EQUALITY ACT

The Equality Act applies to all areas of studying including admissions, the provision of education, student services and exclusions. Universities and colleges must not discriminate against you either directly or indirectly, or for any reason connected with your disability. You're also protected against harassment and victimisation.

Providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to make sure that you're not substantially disadvantaged on your course.

If you feel that a college or university has discriminated against you, the Equality Advisory and Support Service can support you to resolve the issue informally. In some cases they may write to a college or university on your behalf to try and bring about resolution. Visit their website for up-to-date information and full contact details.

**T** 0808 800 0082

**W** [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)

If you decide that you want to take a case further under the Equality Act, you should refer to a legal advisory service, such as Community Legal Advice or the Law Centres Federation.

If you want to take a case to court, you must lodge it with the court within six months of the discrimination taking place. This may be extended if you use a conciliation service or the OIA. However, it's best to take legal advice before suspending any action. The OIA can't look at complaints about admissions and may advise other forums are more appropriate for certain kinds of discrimination.

### For more information

Refer to the following Disability Rights UK factsheets for information on making a complaint and your rights under the Equality Act:

- *Making a complaint*
- *Understanding the Equality Act: information for disabled students*

These can be found in the Guidance & Resources section of our website:

**W** [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources)

Our student helpline can provide information about grievance procedures if you experience problems getting Disabled Students' Allowance or support from your college or university.

**T** 0330 995 0414

**E** [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission website has a series of guidance documents which can be used as a guide for cases.

**W** [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Although mainly for legal professionals, you may find it useful to refer to their education guidance document (non-statutory Code of Practice):

- *What equality law means for you as an education provider – further and higher education*

## Joe Weaver

BA (Hons) Applied Arts, University of Wolverhampton

**My course involves lots of practical work based on three-dimensional forms and working with materials such as glass, ceramics and metals.**

Over the last three years I have been supported by sign language interpreters, manual notetakers and English support tutors. The support I have received has been very helpful because it makes things easier for me to access my studies.



Normally the interpreters are with me in the lectures. I have a manual notetaker because I have to concentrate on the interpreter all the time to translate what the lecturer is saying. It is difficult for me to watch and write at the same time. The notetaker is very useful. They pick up all the important information and give it to me to take home and re-cap.

I also have English support tutorials. These are normally one hour every week and I can use sign language with the tutor which makes it easier for me to communicate with her. It is very useful for all the deaf students to have English support tutorials because they help to polish up grammar and correct mistakes in sentences.



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*It is important to let my lecturer know that I have an English support tutor because English is my second language. My first language is BSL.*

Every week I bring my essays and dissertation to show my tutor and we discuss how it needs to improve and the best way to make it easier and clearer for my lecturer to read. It is important to let my lecturer know that I have an English support tutor because English is my second language. My first language is BSL.

At the University of Wolverhampton, they have a Student Enabling Centre which has three full-time interpreters and group of notetakers. Their responsibility is to book freelance interpreters from outside for my lectures. I receive Disabled Students' Allowances to pay the cost of the interpreters, notetakers and English support tutorials.

# Resources

## WEBSITES

### AbilityNet

[www.abilitynet.org.uk/free-tech-support-and-info](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/free-tech-support-and-info)

Free factsheets on ways that computers and other digital technology can help disabled people, 'My Computer My Way' guide to accessibility features and a library of webinar recordings.

### Access to Higher Education

[www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)

Information about the Access to Higher Education Diploma which prepares people without traditional qualifications for study at university.

### Aim Higher

<https://aimhigherlondon.org.uk>

Aim Higher's Disability Services Directory is a searchable resource which identifies the support available to disabled learners across London universities.

### Bright Knowledge

[www.brightknowledge.org](http://www.brightknowledge.org)

The Bright Knowledge resource library has information about higher education, money and careers.

### Careersbox

[www.careersbox.co.uk](http://www.careersbox.co.uk)

Free online library of careers-related films.

### Careers Wales

<https://careerswales.gov.wales>

Careers information and advice as well as contact details for local careers centres in Wales.

### Care Quality Commission

[www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/find-homecare-agencies](http://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/find-homecare-agencies)

Information about colleges, universities and domiciliary care organisations that provide personal care in your home.

### Council for Disabled Children

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/all-resources>

SEND reforms: What children and young people need to know. Series of factsheets, films and posters to help disabled young people understand the key themes of EHC plans, Post-16 support, the Local Offer and making decisions.

### Discover Uni

[www.discoveruni.gov.uk](http://www.discoveruni.gov.uk)

Helps students compare universities and colleges based on satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey, official data on jobs and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students.

### Money Saving Expert

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/family](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family)

See Students section for money saving tips, 20 key facts on tuition fees, student loans and grants.

### Morrisby

[www.morrisby.com](http://www.morrisby.com)

Has an interesting questionnaire and allows you to search for courses based on study style, location and type of provider.

### National Careers Service

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk>

Career planning, information and advice service for students in England.

### Postgraduate search

[www.postgraduatesearch.com/funding](http://www.postgraduatesearch.com/funding)

This site provides a freely searchable database of the financial help that is available to postgraduate students.



### Prospects

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Information on graduate careers and postgraduate study.

### Push Online

[www.push.co.uk](http://www.push.co.uk)

Information about choosing a university, student life, clearing and Push publications.

### Skills Development Scotland

[www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

Information on education opportunities, career planning, Individual Learning Accounts and finding a local careers centre in Scotland.

### Student Finance

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

Quick guides to student finance and student loan repayments.

### The Student Room

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

Forum and discussion areas for sharing experiences and thoughts about studying in higher education. The website also contains specific resources for mature students, including an interactive map, a mature student forum and video case studies.



### Transition Information Network (TIN)

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/transition-information-network>

News, resources and events on issues relating to transition, designed to be useful to disabled young people, parents/carers and professionals.

### UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

[www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)


UKRI works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities and government. It brings together the seven Research Councils UK, Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England.

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Disability Rights UK factsheets

Disability Rights UK produces a range of factsheets for disabled students. They cover topics such as the Equality Act, telling people about your disability, funding and adjustments for disabled students.

 [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/guidance-resources)


### Employing personal assistants toolkit

Online guide to the process of employing a personal assistant, what to do when they are working for you as well as helping you to understand your responsibilities as an employer and your legal obligations.

 [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Personal-Assistant/Personal-assistant-toolkit/Personal-assistant-toolkit.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Support-individual-employers-PAs/Personal-Assistant/Personal-assistant-toolkit/Personal-assistant-toolkit.aspx)

### Future Ready

Disability Rights UK produces a 'Future Ready' e-newsletter to help support you through your post-16 options.

 <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/future-ready>

### HEAP 2025: University Degree Course Offers

Published by Trotman Education. A guide to choosing courses of higher education.

### Ordinary Residence: Guidance on the identification of the ordinary residence of people in need of community care services

The Department of Health guidance on the responsibilities of local authorities and funding personal care for students in England.

- W [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-identification-of-the-ordinary-residence-of-people-in-need-of-community-care-services](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-identification-of-the-ordinary-residence-of-people-in-need-of-community-care-services)

### Prospects Postgraduate publications

A range of online publications on postgraduate study.

- W [www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study)

### Quick Start Finance Guide

Interactive guides for students and parents with information about the different types of student finance available. Available from:

- W [www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/supporting-materials](http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/supporting-materials)

### Student Awards Agency for Scotland Funding Guide

Online guides with information on funding for undergraduates in Scotland. Available on their website:

- W [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

### Special or Unique – Young People’s Attitudes to Disability

Report from Disability Rights UK and LKMco.

- W [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2019/august/special-or-unique-new-report-disability-rights-uk-and-lkmco](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2019/august/special-or-unique-new-report-disability-rights-uk-and-lkmco)

### The Complete University Guide 2026

Contains league tables on more than 70 subject areas and over 100 UK universities.

- W [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

## ORGANISATIONS

### EDUCATION

#### NHS Student Bursaries

Stella House, Goldcrest Way, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 8NY

- T 0300 330 1345
- E Complete online form
- W [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-bursary)

#### NUS (National Union of Students)

- E Complete online form
  - W [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/nationalunionofstudents](https://www.facebook.com/nationalunionofstudents)
- Give advice and produce information on welfare rights for students

#### NUS-USI (Union of Students in Ireland)

- E Complete online form
  - W [www.nus-usi.org](http://www.nus-usi.org)
- The student movement in Northern Ireland.

#### NUS Scotland

- E Complete online form
  - W [www.nus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.nus-scotland.org.uk)
- Provides information to affiliated student associations in Scotland.



### NUS Wales

- E** Complete online form
- W** [www.nus-wales.org.uk](http://www.nus-wales.org.uk)  
Provides information, support, training and guidance to affiliated student associations.

### Social Work Bursaries

Stella House, Goldcrest Way, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 8NY

- T** 0300 330 1342
- W** [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services)
- E** Complete online form  
Information on NHS and social work bursaries, payment dates and downloadable application forms.

### Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3UT

- T** 0300 555 0505; textphone 0131 244 5107  
Phone line open Mon, Wed and Fri 09.00-16.00
- E** Webchat through website
- W** [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)  
SAAS is the awarding authority in Scotland.

### Student Finance England

PO Box 210, Darlington DL1 9HJ

- T** 0300 100 0607  
Textphone 18001 0300 100 0607  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 08.00-19.00
- W** [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)  
[https://x.com/SF\\_England](https://x.com/SF_England)  
[www.facebook.com/SFEngland](https://www.facebook.com/SFEngland)  
Provides information and services to students who normally live in England. They also have a Facebook app to walk you through the steps to applying at [apps.facebook.com/financeguide](https://apps.facebook.com/financeguide)



### Student Finance Northern Ireland

- T** 0300 100 0077  
Textphone 0300 100 0625  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 08.00-19.00
- W** [www.studentfinanceneni.co.uk](http://www.studentfinanceneni.co.uk)  
Student Finance Northern Ireland provides information and services to students who normally live in Northern Ireland.

### Student Finance Wales

- T** 0300 200 4050; textphone 0300 100 1693  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 08.00-18.00
- W** [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

### The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

PO Box 3362, Reading RG1 9UF

- T** 0118 959 9813  
Phone line open Mon-Fri 09.00-17.00
- E** Complete online form
- W** [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)  
<https://x.com/oiahe>  
An independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

### UCAS (The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

- T** 0371 468 0468  
Textphone 18001 0371 468 0468  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 08.30-18.00
- E** [enquiries@ucas.com](mailto:enquiries@ucas.com)
- W** [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
[www.facebook.com/ucasonline](https://www.facebook.com/ucasonline)  
[https://x.com/UCAS\\_online](https://x.com/UCAS_online)  
The central admissions system, which processes applications for higher education.

### UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs

1st Floor, Noble House, 3-5 Islington High Street, London N1 9LQ

- T** Advice service 020 7788 9214  
Advice line open Mon to Fri 13.00-16.00 (UK time)
- W** [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

## DISABILITY

**AbilityNet**

Suite 33, Pure Offices Plato Close, Tachbrook Close, Leamington Spa, Warwick, CV34 6WE

**T** 0300 180 0028

**E** enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

**W** www.abilitynet.org.uk

Supports disabled people to use technology to achieve their goals at home, in education and at work by providing specialist advice, free information and helping to build a more accessible digital world.

**Arthritis UK**

120 Aldergate Street, London EC1A 4JQ

**T** 0300 790 0400

Open Mon to Fri 09.00-17.00

Helpline 0800 5200 520

Open Mon to Fri 09.00-18.00

**E** enquiries@versusarthritis.org

**W** www.arthritis-uk.org

Services included a confidential helpline, self-management and awareness training for people with arthritis and healthcare professionals, and local activity and support.

**British Dyslexia Association (BDA)**

Office 205 Access Business Centre, Willoughby Road, Bracknell RG12 8FB

**T** 0333 405 4555

Helpline 0333 405 4567

Phone line open Tues 10.00-13.00,

Wed and Thurs 13.00-15.00

**E** helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk

**W** www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Offers information, advice and support to people with dyslexia.

**Equality Advisory and Support Service**

Freepost EASS FPN6521

**T** 0808 800 0082

Phone lines open Mon to Fri 09.00-19.00

and Sat 10.00-14.00

Textphone 0808 800 0084

**E** Complete online form

**W** www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

A helpline for individuals advising and assisting on issues relating to equality and human rights across England, Scotland and Wales.

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (England)**

Arndale House, The Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3AQ

**T** 020 7832 7800

**E** correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Produces government information booklets on equality and human rights issues including the Equality Act.

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland)**

140 West George Street, Glasgow G2 2HG

**T** 0141 228 5910

**E** scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (Wales)**

1st Floor, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ

**T** 02920 447710

**E** wales@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

**Lead Scotland**

Studio 1.09, St Margarets House, 151 London Road, Edinburgh, EH7 6AE

**T** 0131 228 9441

Textphone 18001 0131 228 9441

Helpline service 0800 999 2568

Open Mon, Wed and Thurs 14.00-16.00,

Tues and Fri 10.00-12.00

**F** 0131 229 6941

**E** enquiries@lead.org.uk

**W** www.lead.org.uk

Enables disabled adults and carers to access inclusive learning opportunities in Scotland. They also run an information and advice service for disabled students in Scotland.

**Mind**

2 Redman Place, London E20 1JQ

**T** Mind infoline 0300 123 3393

Open Mon to Fri 09.00-18.00

Mind legal line 0300 466 6463

Open Mon to Fri 09.00-18.00

**E** info@mind.org.uk

**W** www.mind.org.uk

Provides an information service and information booklets about mental health.

### Multiple Sclerosis Society

MS National Centre, 8 City North Place, London NN4 3FU

**T** England: 020 8438 0700  
Scotland: 0131 335 4050  
NI: 02890 802 802  
Wales: 020 8438 0700  
Helpline 0808 800 8000  
Open Mon to Fri 09.00-19.00

**E** [helpline@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:helpline@mssociety.org.uk)

**W** [www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk)

Provides information and support in the UK to anyone affected by MS from their network of over 350 local branches.

### National Autistic Society

393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG  
2nd Floor, Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

**T** 020 7833 2299  
Education Rights Helpline 0808 800 4102

**E** Complete the online form

**W** [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

Provides information, advice and support to people with autism and Asperger syndrome and their families.

### RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind)

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

**T** 020 7388 1266  
Helpline 0303 123 9999  
Open Mon to Fri 09.00-18.00

**E** [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

**W** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

RNIB offers advice and specialist DSA assessments in study needs and access technology for blind and partially sighted learners.

### RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf)

9 Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6XU

**T** 0808 808 0123  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 08.30-17.00  
SMS 07360 268 988

**E** [contact@rnid.org.uk](mailto:contact@rnid.org.uk)

**W** [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

Campaigns and lobbies to raise awareness of hearing loss and tinnitus and provides support services for deaf and hard of hearing people.



### Scope

Here East Press Centre, 14 East Bay Lane, E15 2GW

**T** 0808 800 3333

Open Mon to Sat 10.00-17.00

**E** [helpline@scope.org.uk](mailto:helpline@scope.org.uk)

**W** [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

Offers a range of services for disabled children and adults, with a focus on people with cerebral palsy or those whose support needs are not met elsewhere.

### Scottish Sensory Centre

Moray House, School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

**T** 0131 651 6501

**E** [sscmail@ed.ac.uk](mailto:sscmail@ed.ac.uk)

**W** [www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk)

An information service and training organisation for those interested in the education of children and young people with sensory impairment.

### Trailblazers

2nd Floor, 30 Park Street, London SE1 9EQ

**E** [info@whizz-kidz.org.uk](mailto:info@whizz-kidz.org.uk)

**T** 020 7233 6600

**W** [www.whizz-kidz.org.uk](http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk)

Trailblazers is a national network of more than 400 young disabled people. They aim to fight the social injustices experienced by young disabled people and to ensure they can gain access to education and employment.

### Volunteering Matters

The Levy Centre, 18-24 Lower Caption, London E5 0PD

**T** 020 3780 5870

**E** Complete online form

**W** <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk>

Involves people in high quality volunteering and learning opportunities. Places young people as volunteers to work as personal assistants.



**Into Apprenticeships**  
The guide for disabled people

Free to download

## Into Apprenticeships

### The guide for disabled people

Doing an apprenticeship is a great way to earn a salary, get qualifications and develop your career. This guide is designed to help disabled people, parents and advisers answer the key questions about applying for apprenticeships in England.

#### The guide includes:

- The benefits of an apprenticeship, how to apply, find vacancies, and what support is available in the workplace
- Case studies where disabled students write about their own experiences
- A resources section listing helpful websites, publications and organisations

“We wrote Into Apprenticeships to deal with all the common questions we receive about how to find an apprenticeship and whether the training will be accessible. The stories written by disabled apprentices about their experiences are really inspiring and we hope this guide will help you make the right choices and get the support you need”

Tony Stevens, Careers guidance specialist and adviser

You can buy our publications online at [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)



## Expert training and advice for colleges and universities

Disability Rights UK is a registered charity with expert trainers and advisers on disability issues. We have a unique perspective as we are led by disabled people and support people across the UK with every type of impairment.

#### Our services for education providers include:

- Disability Confidence and Equality Act training
- Benefits training for student advisers in FE or HE
- Disability advice line services for employees and HR professionals
- Membership packages including access to our range of helplines and free copies of our education publications

#### For more information please contact:

Tony Stevens  
Telephone: 07952 548393  
[tony.stevens@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:tony.stevens@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

Disability Rights UK is a charity. We work to create a society where disabled people have equal power, rights, and equality of opportunity. We are disabled people leading change and we are the largest national pan-disability organisation, led, run and controlled by disabled people.

Disability Rights UK has four main priorities:

- 1 Building a movement – strengthen our collective voice
- 2 Independent living – live with choice and control and equality in everyday life
- 3 Inclusive economic opportunities – campaign for a fairer benefits system, ensure disabled people have the opportunities to work and flourish
- 4 Influencing public attitudes and behaviours – create a narrative about our lives, our contribution, our experiences.

## Other publications

We are authors of the *Disability Rights Handbook*, our annual guide to welfare benefits and services. We also publish *Into Apprenticeships*, a comprehensive, full colour guide answering frequently asked questions such as how to find an apprenticeship, whether the training will be accessible and what support will be available. Our factsheets for disabled students cover various topics including the Equality Act, funding from charitable trusts and postgraduate education.

## Advice and information

Through our helplines we provide information on benefits and direct payments, including individual budgets, funding from social services in relation to care needs and advice on employing personal assistants.

## Disabled Students Helpline

We provide free information and advice for disabled students, covering further and higher education, employment, apprenticeships and volunteering. Our helpline is open Tuesday and Thursday 11.00-13.00.

**T** 0330 995 0414

**E** [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## Policy and campaigns

Disability Rights UK is a campaigning organisation. This includes working to influence decision-makers on issues of access and support for disabled people taking apprenticeships or studying in further and higher education.

## Membership

Join Disability Rights UK and help us strengthen the voice of disabled people. We are a membership organisation with over 2,000 members, including universities, colleges and individual students.

You can find out about the benefits of becoming a member and sign up on our website:

**W** [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/membership](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/membership)

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[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)



For free information  
and advice for disabled  
students visit the Disability  
Rights UK website.