

Disability support in higher education

Colleges and universities are continually making themselves more accessible to students with disabilities as a matter of good practice and as a requirement of the law. This is to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and demonstrate their ability.

Support is available in the following areas:

- specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- mobility difficulties
- hearing impairments
- visual impairments
- mental health difficulties
- other disabilities and long-term medical conditions

Finding out what's available

Look on the website of the college or university you're interested in to find out more about the facilities and support available. Once you've identified a course you'd like to do, contact the Disability Adviser or Student Support Services at your chosen college or university. If possible, meet with them to discuss your requirements and ask about the study support services they offer. Most universities and colleges have more than one campus so, if mobility is an issue, find out what's available on all campuses.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Funding for specialist equipment, support, travel and some other specific expenses is available through the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). This is a grant to help meet the extra costs of studying that a student faces as a direct result of a disability or specific learning difficulty. The allowance is designed to help full-time, part-time and postgraduate disabled students study on an equal basis with other students.

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>

Other useful facts to know about DSAs:

- there is no age limit for eligibility
- the amount awarded does not depend on household income (it is not means tested)
- it does not have to be repaid (it is a grant not a loan)
- it is paid on top of the standard student finance package
- you can claim a DSA even if you are working and studying
- if your degree course includes work placements the DSA scheme could fund solutions to disability related issues

Applying for a DSA

For new students DSAs are arranged through **Student Finance England**. You are strongly advised to apply for a DSA several months before starting your studies, as it can

take some time to determine if you are eligible to receive help:
www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk

For continuing students DSAs are arranged through their Local Education Authority.

The Open University has an online DSA eligibility quiz, which is designed to be a quick and easy way for you to decide whether you may be eligible for DSA funding. The quiz takes between one and three minutes, depending on the answers you give. After you have answered all questions relevant to you, you are provided with DSA advice.
www.open.ac.uk/disability/dsa-eligibility-quiz.php

In addition to information about financial support the Open University website gives detailed and specific information about support the OU can offer.

Access to Work

Access to Work is government funding designed to help you and your employer find solutions if practical issues at work are stopping you from making the most of your opportunities. For example if you start a Foundation Degree course while in employment it may be recognised as part of your professional development in work. In this case, the Access to Work scheme could be extended to cover support and fund solutions to disability related problems connected to your studies. You should contact your local Disability Employment Adviser to discuss your individual circumstances.

Contacting your local Disability Employment Adviser

If you feel that the type of work you do is affected by a disability or health condition that is likely to last for 12 months or more, ask the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at your local **Jobcentre Plus** to put you in touch with your closest **Access to Work** Business Centre to check whether you're eligible for help.

For more information

UK government website - follow the links for disabled people.
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities>