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Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

SFWales

2024 to 2025

What is Student Finance Wales?

Student Finance Wales is a service provided by the Student Loans Company. We provide financial support on behalf of the Welsh Government to students from Wales entering higher education in the UK.

This guide will help if you're applying for extra support because you have a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia.

This guide is available in Welsh. We welcome applications in Welsh. This won't lead to a delay in our response.

For more tools and guidance or to apply, visit www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

You'll also find regular updates on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube:

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What's this guide about?

This guide provides information about Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) for new and continuing students in higher education.

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

'DSA is extra support to pay the essential costs you may have as a direct result of your disability', including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia. You don't usually have to pay this back.

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and doesn't cover all circumstances.

If you don't usually live in Wales, you can find out more information about what's available where you live from the following websites:

England: www.gov.uk/studentfinance

Northern Ireland: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk

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

You can still get DSA without telling your university or college, but it's helpful if they know so you get all the support you need. If you don't want to tell your university or college, you should include a letter stating this along with your application.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it's unlawful for universities and colleges to discriminate against disabled students by treating them less favourably when offering places and providing services.

Under the Act, universities and colleges must make 'reasonable adjustments' so disabled students aren't significantly disadvantaged compared with other students who aren't disabled.

Do I qualify?

You can get DSA if you have a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or a specific learning difficulty which affects your ability to study, 'and you're on an eligible full-time or part-time

- undergraduate course (for example, a degree, or HND-level course) including Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and distance learning courses
- postgraduate course, including ITE and distance learning courses

Any previous study won't affect your eligibility for DSA, even if you got student finance. However, if you got DSA for any specialist equipment for a previous course, this will be taken into account.

There's no age limit on getting DSA.

You can't get DSA if you're:

- getting support equivalent to DSA from another funding provider
- eligible for tuition fee-only funding
- getting a bursary from the NHS
- getting funding from a research council
- getting funding from Research Councils UK
- a sandwich-course student on a placement for 10 weeks or more

You may still be able to get DSA if you're doing certain types of unpaid work experience in the public sector or voluntary sector. If you don't qualify for DSA during your placement year, you may be able to get help from the Access to Work scheme.

Visit Business Wales Access to Work Leaflet for more information:
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/skills-and-training-programmes/recruitment-and-staffing/access-work>

You can't get DSA for more than one course at the same time.

Part-time and Open University (OU) students

To get DSA, you must be registered for a part-time (including those provided by the OU) or OU undergraduate or postgraduate course that lasts at least one year and doesn't take more than four times as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course.

Further information on what you can get and how to apply is available at www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Do I qualify?

How do I show I'm eligible?

The following table shows what medical evidence you need to send us when you apply. Remember to keep a copy of anything you send us for yourself.

For physical or sensory disabilities, long-term health conditions and mental-health conditions	A Disability Evidence Form or a photocopy of a written statement or letter from a doctor or other qualified medical professional. This letter should confirm the long-term effects that your disability has on you being able to carry out day-to-day activities, including education.
For specific learning difficulties	A photocopied full diagnostic report, produced from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a practitioner psychologist, or• a specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate.
For Autism spectrum disorders	A photocopy of one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) from a local authority,• an Educational Health Care Plan, or• a written statement or letter from a doctor or qualified medical professional which confirms the long term effects your disorder has on your ability to carry out day to day activities, including education.• an Individual Development Plan

You'll have to pay for any tests you need to prove you're able to get DSA. If you need a test but can't afford to pay for it, you may be able to get financial help from your university or college.

What can I get?

The maximum DSA you can get is up to £33,460 of support per year for 2024 to 2025, this is available for all new and continuing undergraduate and postgraduate students.

What you can get does not depend on your household income but does depend on your needs assessment.

You can get help with:

- Specialist Equipment – for example, a computer if you need one because of your disability
- Non-medical Helpers - for example a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or specialist note taker
- General support – for example having to print additional copies of documents for proof-reading

You might also be able to get extra help to cover reasonable spending on extra study related travel costs that you have as a result of your condition.

How's it paid?

In most cases the money will be paid directly to the supplier of the service, for example:

- your university/college
- a support agency
- a taxi firm

If you're claiming travel costs using a 'DSA claim form', available from www.studentfinancewales.co.uk, the money will be paid directly into your bank account. Remember to keep any receipts or invoices as evidence.

Do I have to pay it back?

No, unless you leave your course early, in which case you may be asked to pay some back.

Anything else?

If you're asked to attend a Study Needs Assessment, your DSA can be used to pay for the assessment and any travel expenses for attending.

If you need more help or advice, you can speak to the disability adviser at your university or college.

What can I get?

What's a Study Needs Assessment?

A Study Needs Assessment helps us learn how we can support your needs during your time at university or college.

Once your application has been approved, a supplier will get in touch with you to arrange your needs assessment, if you've given consent on your application. If you haven't given consent, we'll tell you which supplier you need to contact to arrange your needs assessment.

It's not a test – but simply your chance to have an informal chat with a needs assessor about your disability and the impact it has on your studies.

During your needs assessment, the assessor will evaluate what kind of support you need to help you during your studies.

This helps to produce a report recommending any specialist equipment or additional support that could help with your studies.

We'll only pay for one needs assessment unless your course or needs change significantly. If you're unhappy with your initial needs assessment, you should contact us by emailing **SFW_DSA_Team@slc.co.uk**

Benefits

Most full-time students can't get income-related benefits such as Universal Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance or Housing Benefit. However, certain groups (including single parents, student couples with dependent children and some disabled students) may be able to get income-related benefits while they're studying. Jobcentre Plus and your local authority's Housing Benefit section will take account of any Maintenance Loan (and some student grants) you can get. DSA won't be taken into account.

For more information visit
www.gov.uk

How and when do I apply?

Step 1

New full-time students

You can apply for DSA online after you've submitted your application for student finance. Visit www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

New part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students

You can apply for DSA by completing a full DSA1 application form, which you can download from www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Step 2

After you've applied and your application has been approved, we'll send you a letter with details of your supplier to arrange your needs assessment. If you give permission, we'll pass your details directly to the supplier who'll be in touch to arrange this.

Step 3

We'll get a copy of the needs assessment report and we'll use that to create your DSA2 entitlement letter. This will tell you what support you've been awarded, based on the needs assessor's recommendations. It will also tell you how to access your support.

Full-time undergraduate students don't usually have to re-apply for DSA every year.

Part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students, or those only applying for DSA will need to complete a DSA1 form each year. However, you won't need to resubmit evidence unless your needs have changed.'

You can apply for DSA in English or Welsh.

How and when do I apply?

NHS students

If you're getting funding from the NHS, you can visit the website at <https://nwssp.nhs.wales/ourservices/student-awards-services/>

If you're getting an undergraduate social work bursary, you should apply to us.

NHS secondees

If you're employed by the NHS and are seconded (transferred temporarily) onto a healthcare course, you're not usually eligible for bursaries or DSA from the NHS. However, you can get DSA from us if you meet the eligibility conditions.

Research Councils

If you're getting funding from research councils, you can visit the website at <https://www.ukri.org> for more information on how to apply for DSA.

Information and contacts

Student Finance Wales

For more information or to apply, visit www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

You can also phone us on **0300 200 4050** (textphone: **0300 100 1693**) between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK runs a free helpline providing information and advice to disabled students as well as publishing 'Into Higher Education', an annual guide for disabled students thinking about entering higher education. Visit the Disability Rights UK website at www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Phone: **0330 995 0414** (11am to 1pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.)

Email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org

National Union of Students (NUS)

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

Information and contacts

National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA)

NASMA is a charity working to help students by providing advice, information and training. You can get more information by visiting www.nasma.org.uk

Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS)

The EASS helpline can give information and guidance on equality, discrimination and human rights issues.

Phone: **0808 800 0082**

Textphone: **0808 800 0084**

Lines are open from 9am to 7pm on Monday to Friday and from 10am to 2pm on Saturdays.

Visit the EASS website at www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

You can download more copies of this guide online at www.studentfinancewales.co.uk. You can also order forms and guides in Braille, large print or audio by emailing your details along with which form and format you require to brailleandlargefonts@slc.co.uk or you can telephone us on **0141 243 3686**. Please note, the above email address and telephone number can only deal with requests for alternative formats of forms and guides.

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