

Higher Education in Scotland

This booklet contains information relating to higher education in Scotland, including:

- higher education in Scottish colleges
- higher education in Scottish universities
- postgraduate education in Scotland

For information on other post-school learning opportunities up to further education level (SCQF Level 6) in Scotland, please see the Lead Scotland booklet '[Post-school Learning Choices in Scotland](#)'.

All Lead Scotland information booklets are available in large print, electronic and Easy Read formats on request.

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1. Introduction

You might want to go into higher education (HE) to improve your career prospects, to create new opportunities for yourself, or simply to pursue studies that you enjoy. Higher education gives you the chance to develop knowledge and gain qualifications, as well as the opportunity to meet new people and gain new experiences. You will need to think about your skills, your personality and your interests to decide whether higher education is for you.

This booklet aims to help you through the process of applying to higher education, as well as providing information and advice about any extra support available if you are disabled, and how you might fund your studies. The booklet helps you think about your options in higher education after you have finished school, and is also useful if you are older and considering going back into education.

What is higher education?

Most Scottish qualifications have been brought together in a single national framework known as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This framework places each qualification at a 'level' to help learners understand how different qualifications relate to each other (see table on page 13).

Higher education in Scotland is anything which takes place above level 6 (e.g. Scottish Highers) of this framework, such as degree programmes or Higher National Certificates or Diplomas. Postgraduate qualifications are also classed as higher education.

Higher education in Scotland can either take place in colleges or universities, and in some cases in the workplace (e.g. Scottish Vocational Qualifications).

2. Higher education qualifications explained

There are many different types of HE qualifications available in Scottish colleges and universities, ranging from Advanced Highers in schools or colleges, to general degree programmes, to more specialised work-related qualifications.

Most qualifications in Scotland are either awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) or individual universities.

If you are not sure which level you want to study at, you might want to speak to a careers adviser from [Skills Development Scotland](#), or the college or university admissions department to get more details before you apply.

Many of the qualifications listed below can also be taken as open or distance learning qualifications, for example through the Open University – see page 17 for more details.

For details of further education qualifications (up to level 6), please see the Lead Scotland information booklet [Post-school Learning Choices in Scotland](#).

HE qualifications in schools

Most HE qualifications are taken in colleges or universities. However, some students who have completed Scottish Highers may find it useful to take Advanced Highers in sixth year at school (or at some colleges) as preparation for degree programmes.

- **Advanced Highers (SCQF level 7)**
Advanced Highers are broadly equivalent to the first year of a Scottish undergraduate degree programme, and are also accepted by some universities as a direct progression route into the second year of a degree programme. They are also

useful for entry into training or employment, or other higher education programmes.

- **Scottish Baccalaureate (SCQF level 7)**

Scottish Language and Science Baccalaureates are designed to provide progression to further and higher education or employment in related disciplines. They consist of a group of relevant Highers and Advanced Higher qualifications, in addition to an interdisciplinary project.

HE qualifications in colleges/workplaces

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are vocational (work-related) programmes which cover a wide range of subjects and are designed to provide you with practical work-related skills. HNCs and HNDs are usually taken at college, although they can also be taken at some universities, and are broadly equivalent to the first two years of a degree programme.

- **HNCs (SCQF level 7)**

HNCs normally take one year to complete if studying full-time, and two to three years if studied part-time. If you successfully complete an HNC, you may be able to progress on to an HND or, depending on each university's admissions policy, a degree programme.

- **HNDs (SCQF level 8)**

HNDs normally take one year to complete if studying full-time, and two to three years if studied part-time. If you successfully complete an HND, you may be able to progress on to a degree programme. Some universities may allow you to progress directly to the 2nd or 3rd year of a degree programme.

- **Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)**

SVQs are vocational qualifications which are aimed at giving you the skills and knowledge you will need in specific occupations. SVQs are normally available in colleges or in the workplace, or by a mix of both, and are based on National Occupational Standards. They are available at 5 levels, and those above level 3 are classed as higher education qualifications. Level 4 SVQs (SCQF level 8) involve a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities, and are generally aimed at those employed in managerial positions. Level 5 SVQs (SCQF level 11) are often aimed at professionals and senior managers, e.g. SVQ Level 5 in Leadership and Management.

HE qualifications in universities

The following qualifications are awarded by individual universities:

- **Certificate of Higher Education (SCQF level 7)**

Certificates of Higher Education (Cert. HE) qualifications are awarded after the equivalent of one year full-time higher education. They can be awarded as qualifications in their own right (often job-related), or as an exit award for those people who do not complete a degree programme. Some Cert. HEs are awarded for achievement in several subjects, while others focus on one subject.

- **Diploma of Higher Education (SCQF level 8)**

Diploma of Higher Education (Dip. HE) qualifications are awarded after the equivalent of two years full-time higher education. As with Cert. HEs, they can be awarded as qualifications in their own right, or as exit awards after two years of higher education study at university.

- **Scottish Bachelor's (Ordinary) Degrees (SCQF level 9)**

Bachelor's Degrees, sometimes referred to as 'ordinary degrees', in Scotland tend to be three years long and are available in a wide range of subjects. Depending on the subject studied, it is usually awarded either as a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or a Bachelor of Arts (BA), although in some ancient universities in Scotland this qualification may be called a Master of Arts (MA). Other awards include BEng (Engineering and related courses), BMus (Music) or LLB (Law).

- **Scottish Bachelor's Degrees with Honours (SCQF level 10)**

Such degrees, usually referred to as Honours degrees, tend to be four years long and are broadly equivalent to the three-year BA Honours degree in England. On completion of an Honours degree, you may be able to progress to postgraduate study if you achieve a 2:1 or above. Honours classification is usually determined by performance in the third and fourth years.

- **Graduate Certificates/Diplomas (SCQF levels 9 and 10)**

The Graduate Certificate/Diploma route is a flexible way for graduates to obtain an award for further study in modules of degree and honours level. These qualifications are for graduates, but are not at postgraduate level. For example, a Biology graduate might want to develop expertise in Forensic Science.

Postgraduate qualifications

There are a range of postgraduate qualifications in Scotland, some of which are linked to specific professions, while others allow you to complete an original piece of research. Most types of postgraduate qualifications will include taught and research elements.

Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas (SCQF level 11)

These awards can be academic or vocational qualifications. They are available in a range of subjects, which are often linked to specific professions (e.g. Postgraduate Certificate of Education for teachers), and usually take around 9 to 12 months to complete.

After completing a Postgraduate Certificate, you can progress on to a Postgraduate Diploma. You can also use a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma as a route into a specific career or onto further study, such as a Masters degree.

Masters Degrees (SCQF level 11)

These are academic qualifications, and can be research-based, a taught course, or a mixture of both. They normally take at least 1 year of full-time study to complete (or 2 years if you decide to study part-time), and you may need to submit a dissertation at the end of your course. Masters qualifications include:

- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- LLM (Master of Law)
- Med (Master of Education)
- MPhil (Master of Philosophy)
- MRes (Master of Research)

Note: the 'Master of Arts' qualification is the standard first undergraduate degree in the Arts and Social Sciences faculty in Scotland (roughly equivalent to the English 'Bachelor of Arts').

Some masters degrees prepare you for a career in a particular field, whereas others can prepare you for a doctorate qualification.

Integrated Masters Degrees (SCQF level 11)

These are not free-standing post postgraduate programmes, but are undergraduate programmes extended by one year to enable students to reach Masters level. These programmes are usually 5-year courses. By the end of four years of full-time study, students will have reached the level of a Bachelors degree, and if they choose to do so can complete their programme at that time and leave with a Bachelors degree. Or, providing they have reached a suitable standard of achievement, can study for a 5th year for a Masters degree. These programmes are normally found in science and engineering disciplines.

Doctorate Degrees (SCQF level 12)

A doctorate qualification gives you the opportunity to undertake an original piece of research. It usually takes at least three years of full-time study to complete (or six years if you decide to study part-time). Doctorates involve in-depth study of a specific subject or topic, followed by a written dissertation or thesis. They are usually undertaken under the supervision of an experienced researcher.

Qualifications include:

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD or D.phil)
- Engineering Doctorate (EngD)
- Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsychol)
- Doctor of Education (EdD).

Entry requirements

Undergraduate courses

Entry requirements vary depending on the nature and level of the course, however most degree level courses generally require you to obtain qualifications such as Highers, Advanced Highers, A-Levels or Access Certificates.

If you are an adult returning learner and do not have formal qualifications, institutions might look at other experiences or qualifications you have gained through work or on an Access programme. Access programmes are entry routes in to HE (at SCQF level 6) specifically designed for older learners and under-represented groups. They are offered in some Scottish colleges in partnership with one or more universities, and can guarantee you a place at college or university if you complete the programme successfully. For entry to an Access course, you should apply direct to the college you would like to attend. You can get further advice about this, including information on the courses available, from the [Scottish Wider Access Programme \(SWAP\) website](#).

Postgraduate courses

Most postgraduate qualifications require applicants to have undertaken some previous study or experience in the chosen field (usually an undergraduate degree at 2:1 or above).

Developing your qualifications

The SCQF national qualifications framework gives each qualification credit points and a level to help you understand how different learning programmes relate to each other, and to help you decide how to progress. There are 12 levels, ranging from basic Access courses to Doctorates, and each qualification is allocated 'credit points' to make it easier to see how much learning you have to complete to achieve a qualification (see the table on page 13). Anything above level 6 in this table is classed as higher education.

This allows you to see how you can develop your qualifications by moving up or across the framework levels. For example, you might want to try an Honours degree in Engineering after you have completed an HND in engineering. It is also possible to transfer the credit points that you get for one programme of

learning to another, if the university or other awarding body allows this.

Qualifications at the same level are not necessarily the same in terms of content, length and assessment, but are likely to be at the same level of skill or understanding. So for example, while a Graduate Certificate and an Honours Degree are both at level 10 of the SCQF, you need to achieve 60 credit points to gain a Graduate Certificate, whereas an Honours Degree requires 480, i.e. the greater the credit points, the greater amount of time you need to spend studying to achieve the qualification.

Note: if you are using a screen-reader, you may prefer to read the written description of this table at [Appendix A.](#)

SCQF Level	SQA Qualifications (School, College and some Community Learning Centres)			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions (Universities)	Apprenticeships & SVQs (Colleges and Training Providers)
12			Professional Development Award	Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Professional Development Award	Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate & Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Professional Development Award	Honours Degree Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship, Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors/Ordinary Degree Graduate Diplomas Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship, Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma, Advanced Diploma	Professional Development Award	Diploma of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship, Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate, Advanced Certificate	Professional Development Award	Certificate of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher	National Certificate	National Progression Award, Professional Development Award		Modern & Foundation Apprenticeship, SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5	National Certificate	National Progression Award		Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3	National Certificate	National Progression Award		
2	National 2, Awards	National Certificate	National Progression Award		
1	National 1, Awards				

The table only includes qualifications which have been placed on the SCQF framework, although many other qualifications are available in Scotland. It is also possible to align other qualifications with where you think they should be placed on the Framework by looking at the descriptors for each level. You can see [an interactive version of the SCQF table](#) with descriptors of each level and type of qualification online at the SQA's website. This can be a useful way of comparing the qualifications you have with other qualifications and finding out what level you might be at.

Acronyms in the table:

SVQs – Scottish Vocational Qualifications

SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority

3. Undergraduate education

Undergraduate education usually refers to first degree courses, or those at Higher National level (e.g. HNCs and HNDs).

Choosing a course

You may want to study a course because you are particularly interested in it, or you may want to think about which courses are most likely to get you the job you want. When deciding what to study, there are many things you will need to think about such as:

- Given the current graduate job market, is the course likely to increase your chances of employment?
- Is the course necessary to get the job you want, or could you take an HE qualification in **any** subject?
- Which subject(s) do you want to study? Are you happy with the course content? (The same course at different universities can vary in content.)
- Do you want to study full-time or part-time?

- Which teaching methods will be used?
- How is the course assessed? (Exams, written assignments, practical assessments etc.)
- What level of course do you want?
- Do you want to go straight to university, or would you prefer starting at college?
- Do you meet the entry requirements? Is there a related course with different entry requirements?
- Do you want the course to include work experience or study abroad?

For further advice on which course is right for you, you might find it useful to arrange a meeting with a careers adviser at your school or college, or a [Skills Development Scotland careers adviser](#). You can also discuss this with tutors, friends and family.

The following resources can give you further information about higher education courses:

- **College or university prospectuses:** these set out the courses available at each institution. You can obtain these free of charge by contacting the university or college admissions department or from their website.
- **College or university websites:** each institution will have its own website with a dedicated course search area.
- **Skills Development Scotland:** holds details on the whole range of courses available across Scotland on their [My World of Work website](#).
- **Websites:** [The UCAS website](#) allows you to search for information on higher education courses at universities or colleges around the UK. You will also find links to the websites of institutions.

Deciding where to study

You may be tempted to apply only to institutions which seem to have good provision for disabled students, or one that is closest to you. But take care – choosing the right institution and course for you is very important. A good way to start is to make a list of the places that offer the courses you want. Then think through the other issues that might be important to you as a student.

For example:

- **Academic considerations:** you might want to think about the facilities and reputation of the college or university, the subjects offered, the academic support it offers.
- **Location:** do you want to go somewhere near or away from home? A single campus or a multi-site institution? Is it near to accessible transport links?
- **Student community:** is it a small or large university? How many students are there?
- **Access:** by law, all colleges and universities should be accessible. However, you might find it useful to visit the institutions you are interested in to make sure they are appropriate for your particular needs.
- **Disability support:** please see [section 6](#) and [section 7](#).
- **Accommodation:** accommodation should be accessible, however it is important to ensure that the accommodation offered is accessible for your particular needs. You might also need to find out if the university are able to install equipment or adaptations, or if they will provide a room for your personal assistant if you have one. You will also need to think about things such as cost, location, facilities, catering, etc.
- **Recreation and leisure facilities:** are facilities such as clubs, shops, sports facilities, etc. accessible? It is important to be able to access the local area as well as the college or university, especially if you are living away from home.

Deciding how you will study

The way a higher education course is taught could be different from what you have been used to. The main teaching methods are:

- lectures: an expert on a topic speaks to a large group of students, often using overhead slides or other visual aids
- seminars/tutorials: a less formal setting than a lecture during which thoughts are shared and theories developed in smaller groups
- computer-based learning: often interactive learning
- practical or laboratory work, sometimes with supervision.

Some courses will require you to study more on your own, while others will have more lectures and tutorials to attend. Some may include placements, work experience or study abroad.

Full-time or part-time?

You may feel that you will not be able to study full-time due to your impairment, because you have a job you do not want to give up or a family to support, or because you prefer the flexibility of part-time study. Some courses can now be taken part-time. However, you should bear in mind that this will usually take longer to complete and there may be different funding arrangements – see [section 8](#) for more information.

Open or distance learning

If you do not want to attend a course at a set time or place, you could think about studying at home or at work instead. This is called Open Learning and courses vary in the way they are set up and how you study. For some courses you will be sent a list of books and worksheets to work through, or you might use additional study methods like the internet, videos, computer software or watching TV programmes. Occasionally, attendance is necessary for practical work or supervised assessment, but this

can usually be arranged flexibly. You will also have the support of a tutor who can provide guidance and support on a regular basis.

The [Open University](#) is the largest open learning institution in the UK, and offers a range of higher education courses.

4. Postgraduate education

There are many reasons to choose postgraduate study. Some people really enjoy their subject and want to learn more about it. For others, it is about pursuing their chosen career, enhancing their job prospects or changing to a new vocational area.

The advantages of postgraduate study need to be weighed against practical considerations, especially cost. In the current economic climate, where there might be fewer graduate jobs available, it's tempting to stay on in education. However, it's important to research whether postgraduate study really will help you get the job you want. In some cases, it may be that work experience is a better way to get the skill you need.

Choosing a course

When choosing which postgraduate course to apply for, you may find it useful to speak to a careers adviser. You can usually use the careers service of the institution where you studied for up to three years after graduation or you may be able to use the service at your nearest university.

['Prospects' graduate careers website](#) contains comprehensive information about postgraduate study, including a database that allows you to search for courses.

You can also use the [FindAMasters website](#) to access a comprehensive database of postgraduate Masters courses, including study opportunities in other countries.

When should I study?

Choosing when to study will depend on your personal circumstances and career goals.

Straight after your degree

This option may be particularly beneficial when the knowledge gained in your undergraduate degree is relevant to your postgraduate course as it ensures continuity.

This option may also boost your CV before entering the job market as you may gain advantageous skills or qualifications for the area of work you wish to enter.

After a break from studying

This might be a good option if you feel you would benefit from a break in studying, or if you need to work to earn money to pay for your postgraduate study.

Getting some work experience first might also be particularly beneficial as a means of gaining valuable transferable skills, or to improve your chances of getting accepted to the course (e.g. for social work or teaching courses).

While working

Some employers may sponsor postgraduate study, which gives you the benefit of studying and working simultaneously. This gives you the opportunity to put chunks of taught theory into practice.

After working full-time

This may be a good option if you are thinking about a career change. However, if you are not sponsored by an employer you will need to adjust to the lack of a regular salary.

5. Applying for a higher education course

Application process

Undergraduate courses

Applications should be made through one of the following processes:

- **Directly to the college/university:** for most HNCs and HNDs, you should apply directly to your chosen college (for HNC/Ds in universities you should apply through UCAS). You can either contact the college to get an application form or, in some cases, download it from the institution's website. You should also apply straight to the Open University (OU) for OU courses.
- **Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS):** this is an online application process for most undergraduate degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education, and some Diplomas. For some HNC or HND courses in universities you may also need to apply through UCAS, rather than directly to the institution. You will get help from your school, college or Skills Development Scotland to apply to UCAS. You can make up to five choices for degrees at different higher education institutions (or four choices if you want to study Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Medicine).

- **UCAS Teacher Training:** Whether you are looking for undergraduate or postgraduate teacher training programmes in Scotland, you must apply through the scheme. Register with UCAS and search for 'education' under undergraduate options – Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) courses appear in undergraduate options.
- **UCAS Conservatoires Scheme:** Applications to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly known as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) and conservatoires in the rest of the UK, should be made through the [UCAS Conservatoire scheme](#). Music courses at all other institutions in Scotland should be made through UCAS.

After you have been accepted to your chosen institution, you might find it useful to visit the college or university to talk about the support you might need when you start the course.

Postgraduate courses

For the majority of postgraduate courses in Scotland you will need to apply directly to your chosen university.

You can also use the UCAS Postgraduate service to apply for some postgraduate courses. Check the [postgraduate search tool](#) for details of how to apply for the courses you're interested in.

Apply for Postgraduate courses through other schemes

For some postgraduate courses, you'll need to apply through other UCAS schemes:

[Postgraduate performing arts at a conservatoire](#)

[Postgraduate teacher training in England and Wales](#)

[MA/MSc Social Work, nursing, medicine, LLB accelerated programmes or Scottish teacher education*](#)

*These courses can be found in the UCAS Undergraduate scheme. Make sure you have applied the correct filters in our search tool.

When to apply

Undergraduate courses

Most degree courses have a deadline of 15th January at 18:00 (UK time), but if you are applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry, or to Oxford University or Cambridge University, the deadline is 15th October at 18:00 (UK time). Some art and design courses have an admissions deadline of 24th March.

You should double check with each institution/admissions body to make sure you don't miss the deadline.

Postgraduate courses

Application deadlines for postgraduate courses vary. You should therefore check with your chosen institution to find out if the course you are applying for has an application deadline.

Giving information about your impairment

Most application forms ask if you have a disability or additional support needs. You don't need to fill this in if you don't want to. However, if you do, the college or university will be able to meet your needs much more effectively. All information given to institutions about your impairment or support needs will be kept private and will not be passed on to anyone else unless you give

your permission. Under the Equality Act, education providers are not allowed to discriminate against you because you are disabled. For further details, see [section 7](#).

By letting the college or university know about your support needs at an early stage, you are giving staff time to think about what changes, if any, would need to be made to support you if you are offered a place.

Selection Interviews

If you have to attend an interview, let the institution know if you need any particular arrangements, e.g. an interpreter or extra time. You may be asked about your impairment, for example about adapting course material to suit your needs. Be prepared to speak about potential problems and practical solutions. It is best if this has already been discussed during an information visit.

Offers

Admissions staff decide whether to offer you a place and the offer will either be 'conditional' (your exam results must meet the grade requirements of the course) or 'unconditional' (you are offered a place with no further conditions).

Rejections

If you think you have been rejected because of your impairment, contact the institution to find out. If the institution is not able to provide the facilities or access you require, and you have applied through UCAS, you will be able to choose a replacement course. If you feel you have been unfairly rejected because of your impairment, you may need to go through the internal complaints procedure. Refer to the Lead Scotland guide, [The Equality Act in Post-school Learning](#) for more information.

If you do not have any offers

If you decline all offers, or if all your applications are rejected, you may be eligible for UCAS Extra (if you have applied through the UCAS system). This is a scheme which allows you to make additional choices, one at a time. When UCAS writes to you with your final decision letter, they will tell you if you are eligible for Extra. The courses available through Extra will be highlighted on the course search service on the UCAS website, or you can contact universities and colleges directly. You can apply for courses through [Extra on the UCAS website](#).

If you do not gain the exam results you need

If you do not gain the exam results you need, or if you decline all your offers, do not panic. Contact the college or university to find out if they will accept you if you were close to the results you needed. Places on the course could still be open. Otherwise, there are three further options:

- **Clearing** (UCAS system only): from July to September, if a higher education institution has any degree places available they will enter them into a system called 'Clearing'. If you did not receive any offers, you declined all offers, or you were unsuccessful in receiving the qualifications you expected, you can apply for a place through Clearing. (However, if you have complex care needs, this option may be difficult for you, as it can be challenging to set up support in the short time before the start of term). UCAS will send you details of Clearing and you should check newspapers and university websites for Clearing places. There are often helplines set up by Skills Development Scotland who will be able to provide you with additional advice and guidance during the Clearing period.

- **Retaking:** if you are determined to take a particular course, retaking exams may allow you to reapply the following year. It is worthwhile asking individual institutions about their admissions policies as better grades may be expected.
- **Rethinking:** think about alternative courses or a career path that may not involve higher education. Talk over your options with a careers adviser at school or at Skills Development Scotland. Have a look at our [Post-school Learning Choices in Scotland guide](#) for learning and training options below HE level.

6. Disability-related support: Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

The information in this section is taken from the Lead Scotland guide [Supporting You at University: A guide for people with additional support needs in Scotland's universities](#).

What is the Disabled Students' Allowance?

If you have an impairment, learning difficulty or a long-term physical or mental health condition that may impact your studies, and are taking a higher education course at college or university, you may be eligible for extra funding from the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This allowance is intended to cover any extra costs you have while you are studying that arise because of your disability. It is **not** intended to pay for:

- Disability-related costs that you would have whether you were a student or not, e.g. personal care support;
- Study costs that every student might have.

There are three allowances to cover different areas of need:

- Basic allowance
- Large items of equipment allowance
- Non-medical helper's allowance

DSA is needs-based and therefore not paid in set amounts. You may receive a grant to cover the cost of specific items of equipment, specific support worker costs, and so on. However, there are maximum amounts for each allowance. DSA is not means-tested, so you can receive it regardless of the income of yourself and your family and it does not affect any benefits you might be claiming.

Who is eligible for DSA?

In order to be able to apply for DSA, you need to meet the residence conditions as well as the course conditions.

Residence eligibility:

- To meet the residence conditions, you must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before the first day of the first academic year of your course (the relevant date) and ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date. For the majority of students who start their course in the autumn term, the relevant date is 1 August. You must also be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 on the relevant date. Ordinarily resident means Scotland would be your normal place of residence and you have not moved there to specifically do a course of education.
- If you do not meet the residence conditions set out above, you may still be eligible for funding in certain circumstances.

Residency can be complicated; if you have any doubts about your eligibility, you should phone the SAAS helpline on 0300 555 0505 for advice. You can find further information about [residency on the SAAS website](#). You can also read more about residency in [Appendix B](#).

If you are ordinarily resident in other parts of the UK, you should apply to your local awarding authority for DSA.

If you are an **international student**, you will not be eligible for DSA. However, universities and colleges are required to make 'reasonable' adjustments' to their services to ensure that disabled students are not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'. This means that they must not discriminate against disabled students in areas such as enrolment and admissions and in the provision of student services. You can read more about this in [Section 7](#).

In the case of international students, the amount being paid in fees is a factor that may be considered when deciding what is a reasonable adjustment.

Course eligibility:

You can claim DSA if you are enrolled on a full-time or some part-time HE courses at a college or university in the UK. Please note the following:

- If you are taking a **part-time** course, the course must be at least 50% of the full-time equivalent; that is, not last more than twice as long as the full-time equivalent. The maximum amount you can receive is in proportion to a full-time course (except for the specialist equipment allowance), eg. if you study for half a week, the maximum amount you can receive is 50% of these allowances.

- If you are taking a **postgraduate** course, DSA is available on the same basis as undergraduate courses. However, if you are receiving funding from a Research Council or the Scottish Social Services Council, they will be expected to award your DSA, instead of the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)
- If you are taking an **open or distance learning** programme, the process is the same as for other forms of study. If you are studying part-time, this must be at least 50% of a full-time programme of study, or should be at least 60 credits in a year if it is an Open University course.

DSA Allowances

DSA is made up of three parts:

(i) Large items of equipment allowance

This allowance is for items of specialist equipment you need to participate in your programme of study and to benefit fully from it, for example:

- A computer or laptop, possibly with adaptive technology or software (Dragon or Microsoft Word)
- A digital voice recorder
- Printers (including Braille printers)
- Electronic notetakers
- Radio microphone system
- Specialist furniture, for example, chair, table or back support to enable you to study
- Insurance or extended warranty costs
- Approved equipment repairs
- Training in how to use the equipment

The maximum amount available is £5,160 for the whole of your course of study (not per year).

Any equipment bought with this allowance belongs to you and you do not have to return it when you finish your programme of study. This allowance can be paid at any time during your studies, as long as the total payments do not exceed the maximum. You may be asked to produce an estimate or quotation of the costs of the equipment before the allowance will be paid.

If your needs for equipment change during your course, you can make additional claims, subject to the overall maximum. If your need for equipment arises towards the end of your studies, SAAS is likely to be cautious about buying major items of equipment, and may ask you to consider alternative arrangements, for example leasing equipment or using human support instead, if this is possible.

(ii) Non-medical personal helpers' (NMPH) allowance

This allowance is for any course-related personal assistance you might need in order to benefit fully from your course. For example, you can apply for the costs of sign language interpreters, readers or a mobility enabler. DSA does not meet the cost of extra academic tuition or support in the subject you are studying. However, if you need specialist tutorial support that is specifically related to your disability, for example study skills support for dyslexic students, you may be able to claim the costs from this allowance. DSA does not pay for help that you would need whether you were a student or not, such as assistance with your daily living needs.

The maximum amount available for each year of your course is £20,520 if you are a full time student. As payments are usually for helpers' wages or costs, they are usually made in regular instalments, and can be paid to you, your institution, or your helper. The way in which you get your assistance will depend

upon the institution you attend and what suits you best. You might want to use a helper employed by the institution or an agency, or you might want to employ your own helper directly. Be aware that some institutions may discourage you from employing your own helper to ensure they can quality assure the support you are getting, speak to the Disability team at your institution for more information.

For more information on the options available to you, please see the Lead Scotland guide, [Arranging Support Workers in Higher Education](#).

(iii) Basic allowance

This allowance is intended to cover any costs related to disability and study that are not covered by the other specific allowances. For example, this allowance can pay for extra books or photocopying if you are unable to study for long periods in the library, extra costs of special dietary needs over and above your normal costs, and extra ink cartridges and paper that you need for your studies.

The maximum amount for full-time students is £1,725 per year. For part-time students, the allowance is pro-rata (e.g. if you are studying for 50% of the length of a full-time course you will be entitled to £863).

Applying for DSA

Who should I apply to for my DSA?

DSAs are paid by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) for Scottish students (including Scottish students who are studying in the rest of the UK). Students from the rest of the UK should apply to their local awarding bodies:

- students in England should apply to Student Finance England
- students in Wales should apply to their local authorities
- students in Northern Ireland should apply to their local Education and Library Board.

The process of applying for DSA can be quite complicated, please see Lead Scotland's [DSA factsheet](#) for further information on how to apply.

Evidence of your impairment

To apply for DSA, you need to provide SAAS with evidence of how your impairment impacts your ability to learn and study. This is usually a letter from your GP, a report from an educational psychologist (for example, if you have dyslexia), or a report from another relevant organisation. If you need to have a diagnosis to establish whether or not you have an impairment (e.g. dyslexia), you cannot claim the diagnostic assessment costs through DSA. In this case, you may be able to get help from your institution's hardship fund. Be aware that the letter from your GP needs to specify how your impairment could impact your studies, rather than just stating your diagnosis. You can also ask your GP to complete the [SAAS medical evidence form](#) as an alternative to writing a letter.

Completing the application form

You should arrange to meet the disability adviser/support staff in your college or university to complete the application form. They can discuss with you the nature of your course and the different kinds of possible support. They can also tell you about the equipment and services they can provide directly. Someone from your college/university needs to sign the DSA form before you send it to SAAS.

It is important to note that your application is only valid for one academic year of study. You must apply for DSA in each year of your course.

Attending a needs assessment

If you are applying for DSA for the first time or if your condition has changed significantly since you last applied, you will be asked to have an assessment of your needs. This assessment can be done by most colleges or university, or by an Access Centre. Most colleges and universities in Scotland have validated assessment centres located at one of their campuses. SAAS hold a [full list of all validated assessment centres](#) in Scotland on their website.

The assessment looks at how your condition affects you and what support you require to help you complete the course. It will identify needs that can be paid for by DSA, as well as support that your college or university can provide. This assessment can be very helpful for you as the assessor may be aware of solutions that you have not tried before, and will also take into account the higher education environment, which might be new to you. SAAS will provide you with full information about how to arrange this assessment and will pay for it.

Paying your DSA

SAAS will pay your DSA straight into your nominated bank account. If you would prefer that your DSA is made to a third party (e.g. your university or a supplier), you will need to complete a third party agreement form.

Dealing with problems

If you experience any difficulty with your application for DSA, contact the disability adviser or welfare officer at your college or

university for help and support. [Lead Scotland's Disabled Students' Helpline](#) can also offer advice, the number is 0800 999 2568.

Any administration problems should be sorted out with SAAS directly. If your application is turned down, find out the reasons why this occurred. If you do not agree with the decision, you can ask for a review or make a formal complaint if necessary.

What if my DSA is not paid in time for starting my course?

If your DSA is not paid to you in time for the start of term, you should discuss interim arrangements with the disability adviser or other staff at your institution. They might be able to:

- put support in place at the college/university's expense and then reclaim the money from the DSA when it is in place; or
- make a loan payment from the institution's hardship fund until your DSA is paid; or
- lend you or make available the required support or equipment.

Making an appeal against SAAS' decision

If you have already discussed the outcomes of your DSA application with your college or university and you are still unhappy, you might want to make an appeal.

Frequently asked questions

Is DSA means-tested?

No. Eligibility for DSA does not depend on your income or the income of your family.

What if I have studied before?

You will be eligible for DSA even if you have done a previous undergraduate course.

Can I get DSA if I am not applying for other funding?

If you are not applying to SAAS for your fees or your student loan, you will still be eligible for DSA (as long as you meet the residency and course conditions).

What if my DSA does not meet all my costs?

If DSA does not meet all your disability-related costs, your college or university has responsibilities under the law to make reasonable adjustments (see [section 7](#)), or you could consider applying to grant-making trusts. [Click here to access the Lead Scotland Guide to Charitable Grant-making Trusts.](#)

Can I arrange my own support?

Although some students choose for their university to arrange their support through DSA, you can also use your DSA to purchase and put in place your own support. If you want to do this, you will need to provide receipts for SAAS, and you might want to work out a budget so that you can manage your DSA allowance throughout the year. If you receive the non-medical personal helpers' allowance, you can also choose to employ your own support worker, however you may need to seek approval from your institution in order to do this. For more information, see the Lead Scotland guide, [Arranging Education Support Workers in Higher Education](#).

What if my needs change during my study?

You can apply for help to meet costs throughout your study up to the maximum amount of each of the allowances, although you will need to have a reassessment.

Will DSA affect my welfare benefits?

No. Because DSA is only paid for specific disability/study-related costs, it does not cover daily living costs.

What if I am repeating periods of study?

SAAS may agree to continue making payments of your DSA if, for reasons related to your impairment, you have to repeat periods of study, or you need to extend your study in order to complete it.

Read the SAAS guide, [Notes for the Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\) application](#) for further information.

7. Other disability-related support

This section explains your college or university's duties towards you as a disabled student, as well as the roles and responsibilities of other agencies in meeting your support needs.

The Equality Act

The Equality Act (which replaces the Disability Discrimination Act and other discrimination laws) came into force in October 2010. It contains a number of important provisions for disabled students, including:

Duty to make reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act states that all education providers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure disabled students are not placed at an unreasonable disadvantage compared to non-disabled students. This can be particularly important if you do not receive the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or you have reached your DSA maximum.

Adjustments are changes to policies and procedures, provision of equipment and support, or changes to buildings to make them more accessible. This might include:

- putting in place arrangements for time off and keeping up-to-date with course work for a student whose medical condition leads to frequent illness or hospital admissions
- ensuring students using hearing aids have access to lecture theatres with hearing loops
- ensuring students with dyslexia have access to specialist software or lecture notes
- providing support workers such as readers or notetakers for students with visual impairments
- providing learning materials in accessible formats, e.g. electronically, large print, Braille, coloured paper, etc.
- extra time in exams or flexibility in coursework deadlines.

These duties are ‘anticipatory’, hence education institutions need to look ahead to provide the necessary adjustments which disabled people *in general* are likely to require. At an *individual* level, education providers can only make adjustments if they would be ‘reasonably expected to know’ you have an impairment. This means that they should take reasonable steps to find out if you have an impairment.

Duty not to discriminate against disabled people

In addition, education providers must not discriminate against you as a disabled student or treat you less favourably than a non-disabled student for a reason related to your impairment. This duty covers all main college/university services and procedures, such as admissions and enrolment, teaching and learning, student services, and exclusions.

For further information on your rights under the Equality Act, please see the Lead Scotland guide, [The Equality Act in post-school learning](#).

Meeting your personal care needs

DSA only covers disability-related study costs. The main source of help with personal assistance for your daily living needs is your local social work department.

As a disabled person, you have the right to an assessment of your needs from your social work department. This assessment should include needs such as practical help at home, attending recreational facilities, and any help needed to take advantage of activities out with your home. The needs assessment is intended to establish your eligibility for services, what needs you have and which of these needs social work services are able to meet.

If you leave home to go to college or university, the funding for personal assistance with your daily living needs should continue to be provided by the social work department where you normally live. You can choose to receive services to meet your needs direct from social work, or you can choose to receive funding to meet your needs through Direct Payments.

If you have been receiving services from your social work department before starting your course, you should arrange with your social worker or care manager to be reassessed, as your needs may well change when you are studying. For example, you may be used to receiving a large amount of assistance from relatives or friends. This support may no longer be available when you go to college or university. You should ask for a reassessment as soon as possible before you start your course, as it may take some time to get suitable arrangements in place.

You can read more about social care support and getting assessments on the [Talking about Tomorrow website](#).

Healthcare needs

In many cases, your needs assessment by the social work department may identify a need for healthcare support in addition to your personal care support. If this is the case, your local NHS or joint Health & Social Care board will be responsible for providing that support, e.g. someone to help you take medication at university.

Transport

If you have extra transport costs because of your disability (e.g. if you need to travel by taxi), you may be able to apply to SAAS for your travel costs. You will need to provide SAAS with evidence that you cannot use public transport for disability-related reasons.

Support during the transition from school

You may find that you need support when you are moving from school to college or university, especially if you have to deal with different agencies. Someone from your school or the local social services department can help you coordinate support from different agencies and make sure the support you need is in place.

In addition, your school and other agencies have certain legal duties to help disabled learners prepare for post-school learning. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, places a duty on schools to start planning what support you need about one year before you expect to leave school. This might include things like arranging a meeting with college/university staff, early assessment of your needs, liaising with social work staff, or letting you try out equipment before you

begin college or university. For detailed information about planning for a transition, have a look at the [Talking about Tomorrow website](#), which was created by [Contact](#) in partnership with Lead Scotland.

For help with financial costs involved in a transition that are not covered by the local social services department or your college/university, consider making an application to the ILF Transition Fund. The ILF Transition Fund can provide up to £7,500 for one year, for young disabled people aged 16-21 who are at a point of transition in their lives. Go to the [ILF Transition Fund website](#) for more information about this.

Careers advice

Your school careers adviser or a Skills Development Scotland adviser can help you work out which education, training or employment option suits you best. Skills Development Scotland have a website called [My World of Work](#), which allows you to find out more about different careers, search for courses, identify what your skills and interests are and help you prepare to find a job.

8. Financing your studies

It is important to think about your finances before you enrol on a course, to make sure that you can afford to enter higher education. There are various types of funding available depending on what type of course you are doing and your personal circumstances.

Undergraduate Students

Tuition fees

Full-time students

If you are taking a full-time course at college or university in Scotland for the first time, you do not need to pay tuition fees (as long as you meet the country of residence conditions – see [Appendix B](#)). You must still apply to the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) for payment of your fees, even if you are not applying for other financial support.

Study outside of Scotland

If you are studying outside of Scotland in the rest of the UK, then you will have to pay tuition fees of up to £9,250 per year. You can apply to SAAS for a loan to pay for the tuition fees.

Studying in Europe

Scottish domiciled students studying at eligible European universities can apply for the same bursary and loan support as students attending university in Scotland. This is part of a pilot scheme introduced to encourage more Scottish students to study abroad. For a short summary of the [European Portability pilot you can watch a video here](#). Further information about the [European Portability pilot can be found here](#).

Previous Study

If you have received tuition fee funding before, you may not be eligible to apply again. However there are some exceptions to this rule, including if you have acquired an impairment and can no longer work in the field you originally qualified in. [Click here to read the rules if you have received funding for previous study](#).

Part-time students

If you are taking a part-time course of higher education, you may have to pay tuition fees. However, if you are taking a part-time course of higher education at a publicly funded college, you may be able to apply for a fee waiver grant, which means you won't have to pay the tuition fees. See further down for funding if you are taking a part-time course somewhere other than a publicly funded college.

You are eligible for the college part-time fee waiver grant if you meet the residency conditions and any of the following apply:

(i) YOU or YOUR FAMILY are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Pension Credit
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit **OR**

(ii) YOU are in receipt of:

- Carer's Allowance (or carers who have an 'underlying entitlement' to the Carer's Allowance but gave up the allowance to, for example, claim their pension), Carer's Allowance Supplement or the Young Carer's Grant.
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit

- Contributory/'New Style' Employment and Support Allowance (this also includes people whose contributory ESA has ended due to the time-limited nature of this benefit, but who remain entitled to National Insurance credits for incapacity)
- Personal Independence Payment **OR**

(iii) The taxable income of your family in the previous financial tax year is equivalent to or lower than the threshold below:

- Households with only one person: £8,282
- Households consisting of a couple without children: £12,395
- Households with dependent children: £18,977

Where there has been a material reduction in income from the previous financial tax year, the taxable income of the student's family in the current financial tax year can be assessed. **OR**

(iv) You, or your spouse or your parent are:

- An asylum seeker living in Scotland as defined in section 18 of the Nationality, Immigration 7 Asylum Act 2002 **OR**

(v) You are under 26 and care experienced. This is defined as looked after and in the care of the local authority and can include situations where you were living in a foster home, children's home, residential home, in kinship care or in the care of the local authority in their own home.

If you do not meet any of the above conditions or you are taking a part time course of higher education somewhere other than a

publically funded college, you may be able to get a Part-time fee grant from the Student Awards Agency Scotland instead. You are eligible for this grant if you have an annual income of £25,000 or less, and you meet the course and residency conditions. You can read more about the [part time fee grant on the SAAS website here](#).

Living cost funding

The following support is available to **full-time** students only. If you are studying part-time, you may be able to claim certain welfare benefits to meet your living costs. See [CPAG Scotland's Students and Benefits factsheets](#) for more information or call Lead Scotland's Disabled Students' helpline on 0800 999 2568.

Student Loan

The main source of help with living expenses will be through the Student Loan. This is income-assessed and the amount you get will depend on your own and/or your family's circumstances (this includes your parents, step-parents, parent's partner or husband wife or partner/civil partner).

The maximum loan amounts are:

- £5,750 per year if are classed as a 'Young student'
- £6,750 per year if you are classed as an 'Independent student'

You are classed as a Young student if:

- You are under 25 before the start of the academic year
- You do not have a child of any age dependent on you at the start of the academic year

- You have not supported yourself from earnings or benefits outside full-time education for any three years before the first day of the first academic year of your course
- You are not married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner before the first day of the first academic year of your course (SAAS will review this if your circumstances change during your course)

If any of the above statements do not apply to you, then you are classed as an 'Independent student'.

Young Students' Bursary

Young students can also apply for the Young Students' Bursary on top of the Student Loan. This is an income-assessed non-repayable grant.

The maximum bursary of £1,875 a year will be paid to you if your family income is £18,999 a year or less. The amount of bursary you are entitled to will reduce if your family income is £19,000 or above and will reduce to zero if your family income is £34,000 per year or above.

Independent Students' Bursary

Independent students can claim a bursary of £875 per year if their household income is £18,999 or less per year. Students living in a household that has income of £19,000 or above are not entitled to the bursary.

Care Experienced Students' Bursary (CESB)

Care experienced students will be eligible to apply for a non-income assessed bursary of £8,100. This new bursary replaces the current income-assessed living cost loan and bursary package. Students in receipt of the bursary are not eligible to

apply for the living cost loan but can apply for living cost grants. Read the [Care Experienced Students' guide](#) for further information.

Travel costs

For the majority of students, support for travel costs will be included within your Student Loan. This means that you do not need to apply separately for support with travel costs.

If you have extra travel costs because of an impairment or health condition, for example if you need to travel by taxi, you can apply to SAAS for the full amount of your travel costs (preferably at the same time as you apply for DSA). You will need to provide SAAS with evidence that you cannot use public transport for disability-related reasons. Your income will not be taken into account when deciding how much you will get towards travel costs.

If you are unable to get funding from SAAS to pay your travel costs if you have an impairment, you may be able to get funding from your local social work department or you could apply to your college or university's [Discretionary Funds](#) (further information on Page 50).

Help for dependents

Dependents' grants are only available to **full-time students**. Part-time students may be able to access support through [Discretionary Funds](#) (see Page 50) or welfare benefits (see [CPAG Scotland's Students and Benefits factsheets](#)).

The following do not need to be paid back:

Lone Parents' Grant

There are special provisions for widowed, divorced, separated or single students bringing up children. If you have at least one

dependent child, you may be able to claim an additional grant of up to £1,305. Further guidance about the [Lone Parents' Grant is available here](#).

Lone Parent Childcare Grant

In addition to Lone Parents' Grant, a Lone Parent Childcare Grant entitlement payment of up to £1,215 per year is available to eligible higher education students who are lone parents and who have formal registered childcare expenses while studying. Students do not apply for this from SAAS but instead must contact their college or university who may pay this from their Childcare Fund.

Discretionary Childcare Fund

Eligible students who are not lone parents can apply to their college or university for help with registered childcare costs. Please note, not all eligible students will receive help as the fund is limited. Further guidance about the [discretionary childcare fund is available here](#).

Dependents' Grant

You can claim this income-assessed grant for your husband, wife, partner or civil partner if you care for them. You can also claim it for any other adult dependant you act as carer for. The maximum amount payable is £2,640. You cannot claim this grant if the person you are claiming for also receives student support. Further guidance about the [Dependents' Grant is available here](#).

Subject-specific funding arrangements

Students on certain courses may have different funding arrangements for course fees and living costs, including:

- Students studying Medicine at St Andrews University
- Students who are studying abroad

- Students on a practical placement (sandwich course)

If you fall into one of the above categories you should refer to the [SAAS guidance booklet](#) for more information.

If you have received funding for a previous course then you may still be eligible for a loan.

NHS Dental Bursary Scheme

There is a [Dental Bursary Scheme](#) for eligible students studying a Dentistry (BDS) degree at a Scottish University who started their course before 2017-2018.

Students who began their Dentistry degree from 2017-2018 onwards, may be eligible for a new Dental Student Support Grant (DSSG). The DSSG will provide £4,000 per year, subject to eligibility, to those students who have an annual household income of less than £34,000 in return for a commitment to work in NHS Dentistry in Scotland following graduation. A dedicated page for the [DSSG is available here](#). This page provides more information around eligibility and how to apply.

Nursing and Midwifery

Eligible students studying pre-registration Nursing or Midwifery courses in Scotland can claim a non-income assessed and non-repayable Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary of £8,100 per year for 2019/20 and then £10,000 per year from 2020/21 onwards. Other support available consists of initial expenses allowance, expenses for clinical placements, and other supplementary grants for dependents and childcare costs. See the [Support for Nursing and Midwifery Students in Scotland guide](#) for further information.

Other student funding allowances

Discretionary Funds

Students who are experiencing particular financial difficulty can apply for assistance from their institution's Discretionary Funds (previously known as Hardship Funds). Your college or university is responsible for deciding who gets help and how much. You must have taken out your full student loan entitlement before you can receive this help. [Click here for more information about Discretionary Funds.](#)

Care Experienced Accommodation Grant

If you are care experienced and need help with your accommodation costs during the summer holiday that falls between each year of your course, you may be able to claim the Care Experienced Accommodation Grant. The maximum that SAAS can pay is £105 a week during the summer holiday. It is paid directly to the person that is providing you with the accommodation. You must be under the age of 26 when beginning your course to be eligible. Read the [Care Experienced Students guide](#) for further information.

Other sources of funding

If you are not eligible for financial support from either SAAS or your college/university, or if you need additional funding, you may be able to apply for some of the following:

Grant making trusts

Many trusts or charities offer funding to certain people. There are various trusts in the UK, but the amount of money they give varies. Each trust has its own criteria for whom it will offer help. There are some trusts that specifically offer funding to disabled people and/or students, for example:

- The Snowdon Trust provides grants to ‘students with physical or sensory disabilities’, up to £3,000 per year. Grants can be used for any additional costs incurred by disabled students, such as computer equipment, travel costs, sign language interpreters, adapted accommodation, or other costs which relate solely to disability. Applications are open from 1st February to 31st August for courses starting in September. For further information go to the [Snowdon Trust website](#).
- The Student Health Association Assistance Fund may award disabled students grants of up to £500 towards study-related costs such as computers, software, extra travel costs, or note-takers for example. To qualify, you must have applied for DSA, and can demonstrate needs which put you at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled students. You can get further information about this fund from the [Student Health Association website](#).

For details of other grant-making trusts, please see the Lead Scotland guide, [Grants for Individuals](#).

Sponsorships

Many industrial organisations and some government departments have schemes to support students. You may be able to get details of these from your local Jobcentre Plus office.

ILF Transition Fund

For help with financial costs involved in a transition that are not covered by the local social services department or your college/university, consider making an application to the ILF Transition Fund. The ILF Transition Fund can provide up to £7,500 for one year, for young disabled people aged 16-21 at a point of transition in their lives. Go to the [ILF Transition Fund website](#) for more information about this.

Postgraduate students

Full and part time students studying taught post-graduate diplomas or masters courses at publicly funded institutions can apply for a tuition fee loan from SAAS of up to a maximum of £5,500 (in total, not per year). This includes eligible distance learning courses. If you are studying part time, you must not take longer than twice the length of the full-time course to complete your studies to qualify for a tuition fee loan.

Full time post graduate students can also apply for a living cost loan of up to £4,500 (in total, not per year). Part time students are not eligible for a living cost loan but may be able to apply for welfare benefits instead. See [CPAG Scotland's Students and Benefits factsheets](#) for further information.

See the [SAAS Guide to Postgraduate Funding](#) for further information and to check the eligibility rules.

Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)

You may be eligible for the same funding as undergraduate students, unless:

- you have previously taken a postgraduate course

- your first degree qualifies you for a profession, e.g. doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and priests, etc.

Please check with SAAS to find out if your first degree qualifies you for a profession.

Students taking PGDE courses in certain priority subjects may receive an award no matter what their previous postgraduate or undergraduate study. The priority subjects for 2018/19 are:

- Chemistry
- Computing
- English
- Gaelic
- Home Economics
- Maths
- Modern Languages
- Physics
- Primary Education and Primary with Gaelic Medium, including PGDE courses taught in a Gaelic medium
- Technological Education

See Page 5 of the [SAAS guide to Previous Study](#) for the most up to date priority subjects.

Research Council Funding

Support for a postgraduate degree, such as a Masters degree or doctorate, is the responsibility of the UK Research Councils. All are independent bodies, and the fact that a course lies within its remit does not oblige the Council to support students applying for awards. Research Councils each have their own rules for awarding grants to postgraduate students. Further information on each of the Research Councils and the type of work they fund

can be obtained from the Research Councils directly, or from the [UK Research and Innovation website](#).

Awards for Social Work courses

Awards for postgraduate Social Work courses in Scotland are the responsibility of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). More information is available at [the Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\) website](#).

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

You may be eligible for DSA from SAAS, provided you are not being supported by a Research Council or by the Scottish Social Services Council. DSA for postgraduate students in Scotland is available on the same basis as for undergraduate students, although you should check with your university to see if your course is eligible for DSA.

9. Welfare benefits

As a disabled person or carer you may receive certain welfare benefits and tax credits. If you have any general enquiries about benefits or how to apply for them, you should contact the [Jobcentre Plus](#) for details, or your local benefits office.

You need to be aware of how studying will affect your benefits before you start the course. You must inform your local Jobcentre Plus or your local benefits office of any major change in your circumstances as soon as it happens.

The benefits system in the UK can be quite complex and there are frequent changes to the rules and the amounts people can get. It is therefore best to check the GOV.UK website pages for up to date information and rates, as well as [CPAG Scotland's Students and Benefits factsheets](#). You can also call our helpline on 0800 999 2568 for any queries related to claiming benefits as a disabled or carer student.

In general, if you are studying part time and not in receipt of any student living cost funding (like the living cost loan or young persons/independent student bursary), then it is unlikely your benefits will be affected. However, you should always contact the jobcentre or benefit office to let them know you will be starting a course.

You can continue to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as a full or part time student, however you should still let the jobcentre know if you start studying.

Students in receipt of PIP or DLA may be able to continue claiming ESA and Housing Benefit as a full time student,

although the amounts you get may reduce. Students can only claim Universal Credit as a full time student if they also get DLA or PIP and have already been assessed as having limited capability for work through the DWP Work Capability Assessment (WCA). You cannot get a WCA if you are already a student, however there may be a work around to this. Please call the Lead Scotland helpline to discuss your options as the system is quite complex.

Full time students in receipt of living cost funding may have their income based benefits reduced or stopped altogether, depending on their circumstances. Funding to cover tuition fees or any costs related to your impairment, including the Disabled Students' Allowance, will not affect your benefits.

Full time students are not eligible for Carer's Allowance, see [Section 9](#) for information about additional living cost grants you can get if you are a carer.

10. Support and funding for carers

As a carer, you may find it difficult to find the time to take up a learning opportunity which fits around your caring responsibilities. You may also have had to give up work to care for someone, making it difficult to afford to take part in certain learning opportunities.

There are various sources of support for carers to help you take part in learning, including financial help and practical support and guidance. The support you might get may depend on your personal circumstances, including your income.

Financial support

[Section 8](#) contains information on the financial support available to learners, much of which will be available to learners who are carers (with the exception of those specifically for disabled learners).

[Section 9](#) contains an overview of welfare benefits and further information on benefits for students is available on the [CPAG Scotland website](#) or via the Lead Scotland helpline, 0800 999 2568.

Carers may also be entitled to some of the following sources of financial support:

Community Care grants

Provided by The Scottish Welfare Fund through your local authority, a Community Care Grant is for you if you're getting certain benefits and need financial help to ease exceptional pressure on your family. You could be eligible if you are over 16 and caring for someone who is ill or disabled. To find out more about Community Care grants including how to apply, visit the Scottish Government webpage on [The Scottish Welfare Fund](#).

Support services for carers

Local authorities are responsible for providing various kinds of support to carers. Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) are a way of identifying your needs as a carer. They look at your role as a carer: how being a carer affects you, how much caring you can realistically do (while still allowing you to be involved in activities outside caring), and any help you may need. Carers of all ages are entitled to an ACSP, although for young carers this is called a Young Carers Statement (YCS).

These may be carried out by a social worker, health professionals or by an organisation in the voluntary sector e.g. a carers centre. The responsibility for ensuring that the outcome is implemented remains with the local council.

Caring for someone at any age can be difficult, but it can be particularly challenging for a young person, especially if they are trying to manage school, college or university at the same time. You can get more information about [support and services for young carers in Scotland here](#). Your college or university will also be able to provide information, advice and support related to being a young student carer, so speak to a student support officer. Some Scottish universities have signed up to the Carer's Trust, [Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award](#), which encourages institutions to provide effective support to student carers.

Support from your local council

This might include:

- **Direct payments:** these are cash payments made instead of providing services directly, to someone who has been assessed as needing services.
- **Day care centres:** day centres provide a range of care services for people with different disabilities. They can benefit both the person being cared for and the carer (by providing respite breaks).
- **Home care help:** this might include home care workers such as care assistants or domiciliary care workers for personal care.

See Carers Scotland factsheet on [Assessments and Carer Support](#) for more information.

Support from other agencies

There are a range of voluntary organisations which provide specific support and guidance for carers. Some support all carers, whereas others support specific groups such as young carers, or carers of disabled children. Visit the [Care Information Scotland website](#) for more information about support for carers.

11. Other services available in colleges and universities

As well as thinking about your financial situation, you might also need to be aware of what other support is available if you decide to go to college or university, such as welfare services or accommodation. Please note that each institution is likely to offer different services, therefore you should check with the institution you wish to attend to find out what they can offer.

Accommodation

Many colleges and universities have their own accommodation in the form of halls of residence or flats. For those that do not, most institutions will be able to provide you with advice about accommodation matters, such as financial advice or lists of approved accommodation in the local area.

If you need adaptations to your accommodation, you should contact the college or university as soon as possible to discuss your needs.

Guidance and welfare services

Most institutions have trained staff members who can provide advice and guidance on a range of matters, such as course guidance, careers advice, financial issues or personal counselling. Many institutions also offer Chaplaincies and health

centres, and you may be able to access additional support through the students' association, if your institution has one.

Study skills support

Many institutions offer study skills resources or workshops to help you make the most of your time in higher education. This can be particularly helpful if you have been out of education for a while. Examples might include advice on writing essays, note-taking in lectures, exam preparation or revision tips. You might also be able to benefit from more general workshops such as presentation skills, teamwork and communication skills.

Many institutions also offer a wide range of assistive technologies for disabled students, plus appropriate training.

Students Associations

Many institutions will have a students' association, which is run by students for the benefit of students. Students Associations can offer services such as social and recreational activities, advice and support, and representation if things go wrong. If you become a member of the National Union of Students (NUS), you will be able to get substantial discounts on many products and services, as well as advice and support on a range of issues.

Getting involved in your students' association will also give you the chance to work with college/university managers to shape the institution's policies, and the opportunity to influence decisions about the running of the institution.

Other services

Other services provided by colleges and universities might include:

- nurseries/childcare facilities
- computing facilities

- clubs and societies
- sports facilities
- buddy schemes
- shops/bars

You should check with each institution to find out exactly what it can offer.

12. Useful publications and contacts

Disability Rights UK

A range of information guides are available online at the Disability Rights UK website including:

- [Adjustments for disabled students](#)
- [What counts as a disability](#)
- [Telling people you're disabled: clear and easy guide for students](#)

Disability Rights UK also produce a Handbook. The handbook is a guide to rights, benefits and services for all disabled people, their families and carers. The handbook is available to purchase from the [DRUK online shop](#).

Telephone: 020 7250 818

Email: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

[Disability Rights UK Website](#)

Lead Scotland

Lead Scotland produces a range of information guides related to disability and education, including:

- Disabled Students Allowance Factsheet
- Post School Learning Choices in Scotland
- Higher Education in Scotland
- Supporting You at University
- Support You at College
- Arranging Support Workers in Higher Education
- A List of Charitable Trusts providing Educational Grants to Individuals
- The Equality Act in Post School Learning

You can access all of the [Lead Scotland guides here](#).

Freephone Helpline: 0800 999 2568.

Available Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 2pm-4pm and Tuesday & Friday 10am-12pm.

Email: info@lead.org.uk

Textphone: (18001) 0131 228 9441

[Lead Scotland helpline page](#)

NATSPEC

Natspec is the membership association for organisations which offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many of these further education colleges offer residential provision. Please note there are no specialist colleges located in Scotland, fees can very expensive and funding from a Scottish based social work department may be difficult to secure. The [NATSPEC website has a 'search and browse' function here](#).

Which School? For Special Needs

This guide lists independent, non-maintained and state-maintained special schools and colleges, plus independent mainstream schools with special provisions, as well as schools for children aged 16+.

[Search for special schools here](#).

Turn2Us

For advice on disability, sickness benefits, carers' allowances and grants. Contact can be made through the contact form on the Turn2Us website. There is also a

Benefit Calculator on the Turn2Us website that allows you to check your benefit entitlement and you can search for welfare advice services in your local area. For more information visit the [Turn2Us website](#).

Citizens Advice Scotland

Free online publications, a dedicated helpline and local advisors at Citizens Advice Bureaux across Scotland, providing information and advice on benefits, debt and money, legal rights, housing, work related issues, consumer rights and relationships. Go to the [CAS website](#) to find your local bureaux.

Jobcentre Plus

For benefits enquiries, contact your local Jobcentre Plus. Note there are different phone numbers for each benefit and you can search for the correct number on the [Jobcentre Plus website](#).

GOV.UK

UK Government website containing useful information on:

- support and services for disabled people
- legislation
- welfare benefits and tax credits
- support for carers

[GOV.UK website](#)

Hot Courses

Search engine which allows you to search for vocational and hobby paid courses in the UK, and online courses from around the world.

[Hot Courses Website](#)

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (formerly known as Careers Scotland) can provide advice about learning and training opportunities, careers advice and employment.

Helpline: 0800 917 8000

[Click here to search for your local Careers centre](#)

Click on the [My World of Work website](#) to search for learning and training courses.

Needs Assessments

Most colleges and universities across Scotland are validated by the Scottish Government to carry out an assessment of your needs as a disabled student. The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) hold a full list of all validated colleges and universities as well as Access Centres in Scotland. Access Centres are available for all disabled students regardless of which institution they attend, including distance learning students.

[SAAS list of validated colleges and universities and Access Centres](#)

Dyslexia Scotland

Advice, guidance, events, training, tutoring and resources on Dyslexia related issues in Scotland.

Helpline: 0344 800 84 84

[Search for a local branch in your area](#)

Email: helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk

[Dyslexia Scotland website](#)

Equality Advisory and Support Service

Information, advice and resources including letter templates if you think you have been discriminated against.

EASS Helpline: 0808 800 0082

[EASS website](#)

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The commission works to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality and protect and promote human rights. Their helpline is only open to advisors and legal professionals, however they have a number of resources on their website related to the Equality Act. The Commission can also take on discrimination cases if they are likely to have a wider impact on the public, and they also have enforcement powers if an organisation are not upholding their duties under the act. Contact [Lead Scotland's helpline](#) in the first instance to discuss this.

[EHRC Advice and Guidance website pages](#)

Enquire

Information and advice on support for pupils with additional support needs at school.

Helpline: 0345 123 2303

Email: info@enquire.org.uk

[Enquire website](#)

Social Work Departments

Social Work Departments are part of the local council and their contact details can be found in your telephone book (listed under the council name), on the local council's website or by contacting your local library or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Disability Information Scotland

Disability Information Scotland covers a wide range of topics related to disabled people and their website has a database of disability related services available across Scotland.

Helpline: 0300 323 9961

[Disability Information Scotland website](#)

E-mail through the contact form on the Disability Information Scotland website.

National Union of Students

NUS are the national voice of the student body and student unions, and work to promote, defend and extend students' rights.

Tel: 0131 556 6598

Email: mail@nus-scotland.org.uk

[NUS Scotland website](#)

Appendix A: Developing your qualifications

(This section is a written description of the table on page 13 which people using a screen reader may find useful.)

The table provides information on the main qualifications available in Scotland and the level at which they are placed on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), ranging from levels 1 to 12. It categorises these qualifications into those which are awarded at school (SQA) and colleges, and those which are awarded by universities. The table also shows the number of credit points allocated to each qualification.

The qualifications in this table at SCQF levels 1 to 6 are classed as school and further education level qualifications, while those from levels 7 to 12 are classed as higher education.

Qualifications at SCQF level 1:

- National 1 (6 credit points, replaces Access 1)
- Awards

Qualifications at SCQF level 2:

- National 2 (18 credit points, replaces Access 2)
- Awards
- National Certificate
- National Progression Award

Qualifications at SCQF level 3:

- National 3 (18 credit points, replaces Standard Grade Foundation level and Access 3)
- Awards
- Skills for Work National 3
- National Certificate

- National Progression Award

Qualifications at SCQF level 4:

- National 4 (24 credit points, replaces Standard Grade General level and Intermediate 1 level)
- Awards
- Skills for Work National 4
- National Certificate
- National Progression Award
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 5:

- National 5 (24 credit points, replaces Standard Grade Credit level and Intermediate 2)
- Awards
- Skills for Work National 5
- National Certificate
- National Progression Award
- Modern Apprenticeship
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 6:

- Highers (24 credit points)
- Awards
- Skills for Work Higher
- National Certificate
- National Progression Award
- Professional Development Award
- Modern Apprenticeship
- Foundation Apprenticeship
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 7:

- Advanced Highers (32 credit points)
- Awards
- Scottish Baccalaureate
- Higher National Certificate (96 or 120 credit points)
- Advanced Certificate
- Professional Development Award
- Certificate of Higher Education (120 credit points)
- Modern Apprenticeship
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 8:

- Higher National Diploma (240 credit points)
- Advanced Diploma
- Professional Development Award
- Diploma of Higher Education (240 credit points)
- SVQ
- Higher Apprenticeship
- Technical Apprenticeship

Qualifications at SCQF level 9:

- Professional Development Award
- Bachelors/Ordinary degree (360 credit points)
- Graduate Certificate or Diploma (60 or 120 credit points)
- Graduate Apprenticeship
- Technical Apprenticeship
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 10:

- Professional Development Award
- Honours degree (480 credit points)
- Graduate Certificate or Diploma (60 or 120 credit points)

- Professional Diploma
- Graduate Apprenticeship
- Professional Apprenticeship

Qualifications at SCQF level 11:

- Professional Development Award
- Masters degree (180 credit points)
- Integrated Masters Degree (600 credit points)
- Post Graduate Certificate or Diploma
- Graduate Apprenticeship
- Professional Apprenticeship
- SVQ

Qualifications at SCQF level 12:

- Professional Development Award
- Doctoral Degree (540 credit points)
- Professional Apprenticeship

Appendix B: Residency conditions for student support funding

The following information relates to learners taking higher education courses at college or university.

The residency requirements for UK nationals are as follows:

- (i) You must be 'ordinarily resident'* in Scotland on the first day of the first academic year of the course. This means you must be ordinarily resident on the following dates:
 - 1st August for courses that start between 1st August and 31st December
 - 1st January for courses that start between 1st January and 31st March
 - 1st April for courses that start between 1st April and 30th June
 - 1st July for courses that start between 1st July and 31st July.
- (ii) UK nationals must also have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the 3-year period immediately before the course start date.

There are different rules for asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers, EU nationals, UK nationals who have been living in the European Union and nationals from certain other countries or in certain circumstances. If you are not sure if you meet the residency conditions, you should contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). For full details on residence conditions and eligibility, see the SAAS guide, [Exceptions to the General Residence Conditions](#)

* 'Ordinarily resident' means that you, your parent, or your spouse or civil partner live in a country year after year by choice throughout a set period. In most cases, you may not be treated as 'ordinarily resident' in Scotland if your main purpose for being here is to study and you would normally be living somewhere else.

For information and advice on the issues discussed within this booklet, contact the Lead Scotland Disabled Students Helpline & Information Service at:

Tel: 0800 999 2568

(Mondays, Wednesdays & Thursdays from 2pm-4pm and
Tuesdays & Fridays from 10am-12pm)

[Lead Scotland helpline website page](#)

E-mail: info@lead.org.uk

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