



## Supporting You at University

A guide for people with additional support needs in Scotland's universities

Going to university can be an exciting time. As well as giving you the chance to develop knowledge and gain qualifications, you will also have the opportunity to meet new people and gain new experiences.

If you are disabled or have additional support needs, you will need to think about the support you might need to study at university. The support you will receive at university is likely to be very different to the support you might have received at school or college, and you are often expected to take more responsibility for your learning.

This guide will help you understand:

- What kind of support is available to you while at university
- Who has responsibility for providing the support you need
- Who to contact if you need advice and support

### Further information

You can get more information about the full range of support available to disabled students from the Lead Scotland booklet [Higher Education in Scotland](#).

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## Leaving School

### Is university the right option for me?

When you are thinking about leaving school, you will need to consider whether going to university is the right option for you. While some students go to university straight from school, others might choose to make a more gradual transition by taking a course at college first or taking time out to pursue other interests.

If you would prefer to go to college first, or if you don't have the necessary qualifications, you might want to consider taking more Highers or a Higher National Certificate or Diploma (HNC or HND) at college. Many universities will accept these qualifications for admission to degree courses.

You will also need to think about:

- what course you want to study, e.g. academic or vocational
- where you want to study – you might need to think about the subjects available, disability access and support, the location of the campus, and accommodation facilities
- how you want to study, e.g. part-time or full-time, or distance learning.

Your school careers adviser or your local Skills Development Scotland adviser will be able to give you information and advice about your options in higher education. Skills Development Scotland's contact details are at the back of this booklet.

### What support is available when I'm planning to leave school?

When you are planning to leave school, your school and other agencies have certain duties to help you prepare for post-school opportunities, such as going to university. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 states that your school needs to start planning what support you will need about one year before you expect to leave school. For example, this might include arranging a meeting with university staff, early assessment of your needs, liaising with social work staff, or letting you try out equipment before you begin university.

### How can I prepare for leaving school?

The Additional Support for Learning Act also places a duty on schools to ask for information (with your permission) from any agency you might be involved with after school. The reason for requesting this information is to enable the school to plan any additional support you might need when you make the transition from school to university. It is also helpful for considering the support you might need before you leave school.

You can ask your school to get information about anything you think you might need help with. For example, you might want your school to approach:

- your local social work department (for information about personal care support)

- universities (for information about courses, available support, and arrangements for assessing your needs)
- your local health board (for information about any changes to health provision if you are moving to adult services)
- Skills Development Scotland (for information on education opportunities and career planning)
- voluntary organisations (for information about specialist disability-related support or disability rights)
- the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (for information about financial support for students).

## **Case Study**

William is in 5th year at school and is planning to leave school in around a year's time. He's not sure about what he wants to do when he leaves school so he talks with his teachers and careers advisers about some of the options available to him. William has a visual impairment and needs any learning materials to be available in alternative formats. He also needs someone to help him read things from books, as well as someone to travel with him when he uses public transport.

William decides that he would like to study Politics at university. The support staff at his school help him to find a suitable course and talk to his chosen university about the support they can offer William. After he has been accepted on to the course, the school arrange for him to receive a needs assessment at the university, and pass on information about the support he has been getting at school. They also advise him on how to apply for funding from the Student Awards Agency Scotland, including the Disabled Students' Allowance. As William will be moving to a different local authority area, the school also speak to the local social work department to find out if they can arrange a support worker to travel on the bus with him to university.

## **Moving to a new area**

Many students choose to attend universities in new areas to allow them to study their chosen course or attend a particular university. If you decide to do this, you will need to bear in mind that any personal or health care support you might currently receive will need to be rearranged in a new local authority area. This kind of support is likely to become even more important to you if you have been used to receiving a lot of support from your family or friends.

If you plan to live in a different local authority area during term time and you need personal or health care support, you will need to contact the social work department of the local authority in which you are moving to. Although your home local authority will be responsible for paying for any care that you need<sup>1</sup>, the new local authority will provide your care package. The two local authorities will therefore be expected to work together to arrange to meet your needs. Your school or home local authority

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<sup>1</sup> It is the responsibility of the local authority where you are 'ordinarily resident' to pay for your care needs. Your local authority will be able to help you determine this if your living arrangements make this unclear.

should be able to help you deal with the new local authority social work department, where you will receive an assessment of your needs. The new local authority will then directly provide the services you need or offer you direct payments to arrange your own care package. If the assessment identifies a need for health care needs, the NHS Board in the new area will be responsible for meeting these needs.

If you plan to move to the area where you are studying permanently, then the new local authority will be responsible for paying for and providing your care package.

In both cases, it is important to start planning as early as possible to ensure the support you need is in place in plenty of time for starting the course.

## Going to University

### What is higher education?

Higher education in Scotland can either take place in colleges or universities, although most degree courses are usually taken at university. The table below shows the different types of higher education courses you can take in Scotland (the higher the level, the more advanced the course tends to be). You can get more detailed information on the different types of higher education qualifications in the Lead Scotland booklet [‘Higher Education in Scotland’](#).

Level	Types of Course	What is this?
7	Higher National Certificates (HNCs)	These are higher level work-related qualifications in a range of subjects, normally taken in colleges.  They can be taken as single qualifications or for entry to an HND or degree course.
	Certificate of Higher Education	These are awarded by universities after the equivalent of one year of full-time higher education.
8	Higher National Diploma (HND)	HNDs are the next level after HNCs, normally taken in colleges. Upon completion, some universities may allow you to progress directly to the second or third year of a degree course.
	Diploma of Higher Education	These are awarded by universities after the equivalent of two years of full-time higher education.
9	Bachelors (ordinary) degree	Tend to be 3 years long and are available in a wide range of subjects.
	Graduate Certificate/Diploma	A flexible way for graduates to obtain an award for further study in modules of degree and honours level.
10	Bachelors Degree with Honours	Tend to be 4 years long, with Honours classification determined by your performance in your third and fourth years.

	Graduate Certificate/Diploma	As above.
11	Masters Degree	Postgraduate qualification.
12	Doctoral Degree	Postgraduate qualification.

Entry requirements for higher education courses 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, or A-Levels.

If you are an adult learner and don't have formal qualifications, or the relevant qualifications you need for university, you could consider taking an access programme as an alternative route to higher education. These are offered in some Scottish colleges in partnership with one or more universities, and can guarantee you a place at university if you complete the programme successfully. You can get further information about this from the [Scottish Wider Access Programme](#). Some universities also offer access programmes of their own, and you can enquire about these via university admissions departments.

### **What will I be able to study?**

The above qualifications are available in a range of different subjects, including general and academic courses, as well as more specialised work-related courses.

Your school careers adviser or a Skills Development Scotland adviser will be able to give you information on the different courses available and help you decide what the best option might be. You can also get information from university prospectuses and websites, and the Universities and Colleges and Admissions Service ([UCAS](#)). Contact details are at the end of this booklet.

### **How do I apply to university?**

Application should be made through one of the following processes:

- **Universities and Colleges Admission Service ([UCAS](#))**: this is an online application process for most undergraduate degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education, and some Graduate Diplomas. You will be able to get help from your school, college or Skills Development Scotland to apply to UCAS.
- **Directly to the university**: for [Open University](#) (OU) courses you should apply directly to the OU.
- **UCAS Conservatoires Admissions Service (formerly CUKAS) ([UCAS Conservatoires](#))**: applications to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly known as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) and certain other UK Conservatoires should be made through the UCAS Conservatoires Admissions Service. Music courses at all other institutions should be made through UCAS.

- **Teacher Training Programmes:** the majority of applications for postgraduate teacher training courses should be submitted via [UCAS](#). Find out more about [teacher training options here](#).

If you are taking a higher education course at college (e.g. an HNC or HND), you should apply directly to your chosen college.

### **When should I apply?**

When you have decided which course you want to study, it is best to apply as early as possible to give the university time to consider your support needs. Most degree courses have a deadline of 15 January, but if you are applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry, or to Oxford or Cambridge Universities, the deadline is 15 October. You should double check with each institution/admissions body to make sure you do not miss the deadline.

### **Should I give information about my disability/support needs?**

Most application forms ask if you have a disability or additional support needs. You do not need to fill this in if you do not want to. However, if you do provide details, then the university will be able to meet your needs more effectively. All information given to institutions about your disability 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 2010, education providers are not allowed to discriminate against you because you have a disability. You can get further information about the Equality Act for disabled students from our guide, [The Equality Act in post-school learning](#).

By letting the 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 offered a place.

### **Case Study**

Emma has recently applied to various universities (through UCAS) to study a degree in Accountancy. Before she applied, she contacted her preferred universities to discuss what support they could offer her as a dyslexic student. Emma also indicated on her UCAS application form that she was dyslexic which allowed the universities who made her offers to send her information about some of the support (including funding) she might be entitled to as a disabled student.

## Support for Learners with Additional Needs

### What is the Disabled Students' Allowance?

One of the main differences between further education and higher education for disabled learners is that you can apply for an individual allowance to pay for some of your support costs (rather than the university arranging all the support you need). This is called the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), and it can be used to pay for the extra costs you may have while you are studying, that arise because you are disabled. It is not intended to pay for:

- disability-related costs that you would have whether you were a student or not (such as personal care support);
- study costs that every student might have (e.g. general living costs).

There are three DSA allowances:

- large items allowance (e.g. to buy specialist equipment with assistive technology, an electronic notetaker, or training to use your equipment)
- the Non-Medical Personal Help allowance (NMPH) (to pay for any course-related personal assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, someone to take notes, or a mobility enabler)
- basic allowance (e.g. extra books or photocopying if you are unable to study for long periods in the library, tapes, discs, etc.)

These are just examples of what DSA can be used for, and the amount of money you are awarded will depend on your individual needs. [Read our DSA factsheet](#) for further information on how to apply.

It is important to note that although you can use your DSA to pay for certain kinds of support, your university still has a responsibility to provide an accessible learning environment as part of its duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. You can get more information on this on pages 11 and 12.

### How do I find out what support I need?

To find out about the support you might need at university, you should first speak to the support staff in the university. Most universities have at least one member of staff who advises students who need additional support (usually called Disability Advisers or Disability Coordinators). They can talk to you about your course, the support you have used before and any new support that might be available. It is important to remember that university is a very different learning environment from school, and you will be expected to take more responsibility for your own learning. The support you need at university might therefore be very different to what you have been used to at school.

If you are applying for DSA, SAAS will ask you to have an assessment of your needs to find out more about the support you need on your course.

This assessment might be done by your university (if it has been validated by SAAS to carry out assessments), or you may be referred to an Access Centre. This assessment looks at how your disability affects you and what support you require to help you complete your course. It will identify needs that can be paid for by DSA, as well as support that your university can provide. This assessment can be very helpful for you. The assessor may be aware of solutions that you have not tried before and will also take into account the higher education environment, which may be new to you. SAAS will provide you with full information about how to arrange this assessment and will pay for it.

### **What can I do if I'm not happy with the outcomes of my needs assessment for DSA?**

If you are not happy with the outcomes of the assessment, you should take the following steps:

- you should make your initial appeal to your university's Disability Service (or whoever carried out the assessment) using their appeals process;
- if you are still unhappy after doing this, then you can make an appeal to the university (this should usually be addressed to the Principal);
- if you are still unhappy after doing this, you can make an appeal to SAAS for a review of the assessment decision (SAAS may then arrange for you to have another assessment by a different assessor);
- if you are still unhappy after doing this, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to ask for an independent review.

If the support you require is not usually funded through the DSA, then SAAS might still be able to consider your request on an exceptional basis. In these cases your Disability Adviser would have to write to SAAS with full supporting evidence and ask them to consider it under their "Unusual/Exceptional Cases" process.

### **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 helper's DSA allowance, you may be able to choose to employ your own support worker, however you should discuss this with your university first. Some students prefer to do this if they are already employing their own personal assistant for daily living needs, but if you decide to do this you will need to consider your duties as the support worker's employer. If you would prefer not to employ the support worker directly, you might want to consider using a private agency (who will then take on the role of the employer). For more information about employing support workers, see the Scottish Government guide [Arranging Support Workers in Higher Education](#).

## What kind of support can the university provide?

As well as being able to access support through the DSA, your university can also provide a range of support for learners with additional needs and/or disabilities. This might include:

- providing study skills lectures
- one-to-one support in classes
- providing course materials in alternative formats
- adapted accommodation
- specialist furniture
- computers with assistive technology

The Disability Adviser at the university will be able to tell you what sort of support is available. Many of these support measures will be particularly useful for students who do not receive DSA, or those who have reached their maximum DSA allowance.

## What are my rights as a disabled learner?

If you are disabled you have certain rights under the law. Your university also has specific duties to support you.

The Equality Act is a law that aims to protect disabled people in the UK from discrimination. Education providers must provide extra support to ensure that disabled people can access education. These are known as 'reasonable adjustments', which means the university will need to provide support or make adjustments if these are thought to be 'reasonable' things to do (i.e. it must have a good reason for not making adjustments). This might include, for example:

- providing course materials in alternative formats
- ensuring that university buildings are accessible
- extra time in exams
- providing lecture handouts in advance
- extensions, or flexibility, in coursework deadlines
- use of a computer or scribe in exams
- reserved car park spaces for disabled people

The university Disability Adviser or your course tutor will be able to give you more information about the support the university can provide.

## Who provides support at university?

A number of different organisations provide support to learners with additional support needs in universities. It is important to be aware of who is responsible for providing the different kinds of support to help you make arrangements before you start your course. This might include:

- **Educational needs:** universities are responsible for providing educational support (as long as this is study-related, rather than support for your daily

living/personal care needs). If you receive DSA, you may be able to arrange certain support measures using this allowance, but the university still has duties to provide reasonable adjustments if you have a disability.

- **Personal care support:** if you have been assessed by your local authority as needing personal care support, then it will be the local authority's responsibility to provide this support at university. This is usually arranged through the social work department. This might include help going to the toilet, someone to help you travel to university, or help to prepare or eat a meal. It may also include the provision of equipment to increase your independence or adaptations to your home/student accommodation.
- **Healthcare needs:** your needs assessment by the local authority may identify a need for healthcare support in addition to your personal care support. If this is the case, your local NHS board will be responsible for providing that support, such as someone to help you take medication at university.
- **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.
- **Support during the transition to university:** you may find that you need support when you are moving from school/college to university, especially if you have to deal with various different agencies. Skills Development Scotland can help you to coordinate support from different agencies and make sure the support you need is put in place. Your school/education authority will also be able to support you before and during the transition to university.
- **Other support needs:** voluntary organisations, such as Centres for Independent Living, may be able to provide other kinds of support such as payroll services (if you are employing your own support worker) and advice on self-directed support.

Although different agencies provide different support, they should be working together to ensure that the support you need is provided in the right place and at the right time.

### **What about transport?**

If you have extra costs because of being disabled, for example 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, and give details of the additional costs.

If you are unable to get funding from SAAS to pay for your travel costs if you are disabled, you may be able to get funding from your local social work department.

## Case Study

Kathryn is studying a degree in History of Art at university. She has cerebral palsy and needs help with getting around, going to the toilet and occasionally needs medical care if she has a seizure. She also needs help with preparing written work as she has difficulty holding a pen. Kathryn's social work department arrange for a support worker to go to university with her every day to help her get around the campus and helping with her personal care needs. She uses her Disabled Students' Allowance to pay for a specially adapted laptop so that she can dictate what she says into text. Kathryn provides the university and her support worker with information about what to do and who to contact if she has a seizure.

## Will I receive any other financial help?

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

The main sources of financial help include:

- **Tuition fee waivers:** if you are taking a full-time course in Scotland, you do not need to pay tuition fees (as long as you meet the residency conditions). If you are taking a part-time course, you may have to pay your own fees (unless you or your family have a low income or you receive certain benefits, such as Personal Independent Payment).
- **Student loans:** the main source of help with living expenses is through the Student Loan. This is income-assessed and the amount you can get will depend on your own and/or your family's circumstances.
- **Disabled Students' Allowance:** for disability-related study costs (see page 9).
- **Allowances for parents/carers:** these include the Lone Parents' Grant, the Access to Childcare Fund, and the Adult Dependant's Grant.
- **Welfare benefits:** as a disabled student, you may be entitled to Personal Independent Payment, Universal Credit and certain means-tested benefits. You should contact your local Jobcentre Plus to discuss what you might be able to get, and how studying might affect your entitlement to benefits. You can also get further information on the CPAG factsheet, [Benefits for Disabled Students here](#).

You can get further information about student finance from the Scottish Government site [Student Information Scotland here](#).

## Support from Other Organisations

### Voluntary Organisations

#### [Lead Scotland](#)

Lead Scotland (Linking Education and Disability) aims to widen access to learning for disabled people and carers across Scotland. Lead offers the following services:

- Helping you learn new skills or brushing up on existing ones
- Helping you develop your self-confidence and other personal development skills
- Free information and advice about the support you might get at university and your rights as a disabled learner
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Support finding work experience or during your transition to employment.

Lead's services are available to disabled people and carers at any point in their learning journey, including people who need support to get ready for university, people who are attending university, or those who would prefer to learn in a different environment. They may be able to lend you accessible computer equipment, such as laptops, and a volunteer to work with you on a one-to-one basis.

Please note that some of Lead's services are only available in certain areas (see the [Lead Scotland website](#) for more information).

Disabled Students' Helpline: (Freephone) 0800 999 2568, [info@lead.org.uk](mailto:info@lead.org.uk)

General enquiries: 0131 228 9441, [enquiries@lead.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lead.org.uk)

#### [Capability Scotland](#) (Advice Service)

Can provide advice for disabled people on a range of issues.

Telephone: 0131 337 9876 Textphone: 0131 346 2529

#### [Dyslexia Scotland](#)

Dyslexia Scotland provide support for people of all ages who are affected by dyslexia. They can provide the following services:

- Advice about dyslexia assessments and who to contact to get an assessment
- Help to find a dyslexia tutor
- Advice about how to cope with dyslexia
- Information and resources on support for dyslexic learners in universities.

Dyslexia Scotland will also be able to put you in touch with local dyslexia support organisations.

Helpline: 0344 800 84 84

#### [Enable Scotland](#)

Enable supports people with learning disabilities and their families to participate, work and live in their local communities. It operates across Scotland and has local

managers in most areas who work alongside individuals and their families to develop the services that people want.

Enable also provides supported employment services for young disabled people. Working in partnership with colleges, Enable can provide employment development workers to work with support staff in colleges to help students move into work. Telephone: 01698 737 000, [enabledirect@enable.org.uk](mailto:enabledirect@enable.org.uk)

### [Enquire](#)

Provide advice for children and young people (under 16) with additional support needs.

Helpline: 0345 123 2303 Textphone: (18001) 0345 123 2303

[Online guides related to additional support for learning](#)

### [Equality Advisory and Support Service](#)

Can give information and advice on discrimination and equality rights issues including letter templates for making a complaint.

Helpline: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

### [RNIB Scotland](#)

RNIB provides support and services for blind and partially sighted people as well as the people who support them. This includes:

- advice about specialist equipment and products
- learning new skills to help you adapt if you have recently acquired a visual impairment
- providing materials in alternative formats such as Braille or audio books
- referring you to local support services.

RNIB may also be able to able you during your transition from school to university. Telephone: 0303 123 9999

### [RNID](#)

RNID offer a range of services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Their services include:

- Practical advice and support on all aspects of deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus
- Providing communication support, including BSL interpreters, speech to text reporters, lipspeakers and notetakers
- Providing specialist products and equipment, including advice on how to use them.

There are also a lot of useful resources on the [RNID website](#).

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Email: [information@rnid.org.uk](mailto:information@rnid.org.uk)

## [Scottish Autism](#)

Scottish Autism provide information, support and services for people with autism (including Asperger syndrome). They can provide the following services:

- Advice and information about autism and the kind of support that might be useful in learning environments
- Advice about your rights in education
- Advocacy support for learners
- Information about local support services

Scottish Autism will also be able to give you advice and support about the transition from school to university.

Telephone: 01259 222 022

Email: [advice@scottishautism.org](mailto:advice@scottishautism.org)

## [Scottish Association for Mental Health \(SAMH\)](#)

SAMH offer a range of community-based services for people with mental health problems, as well as a national helpline which can provide information and advice about various issues relating to mental health. Please note that many of SAMH's community-based services are only available in certain areas.

Telephone: 0344 800 0550

[Online contact form](#)

## **Other Helpful Contacts**

### [Colleges in Scotland](#)

Find details of all colleges in Scotland on the [Colleges Scotland website](#).

Telephone: 01786 892 100

Email: [policy@collegesscotland.ac.uk](mailto:policy@collegesscotland.ac.uk)

### [Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living \(GCIL\)](#)

Supports disabled people to live independently

Telephone: 0141 550 4455

Textphone: 0141 554 6482

[Online contact form](#)

### [Local Authorities in Scotland](#)

Find details of all local authorities in Scotland on the [COSLA website](#).

Telephone: 0131 474 9200

Email: [info@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:info@cosla.gov.uk)

### [Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living \(LCIL\)](#)

Supports disabled people to live independently

Telephone: 0131 475 2350

Email: [admin@lothiancil.org.uk](mailto:admin@lothiancil.org.uk)

### [National Union of Students Scotland](#)

Provide advice to individual students and students' organisations on a range of issues.

Telephone: 0131 556 6598

Email: [mail@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:mail@nus-scotland.org.uk)

### [Remploy](#)

Remploy provides a specialist employment service to help people with disabilities and other support needs to get a job. It can offer advice, pre-employment training and employment opportunities. It works closely with some universities to help learners move from learning into employment.

Telephone: 0300 456 8110

Email: [employmentservices.osc@remploy.co.uk](mailto:employmentservices.osc@remploy.co.uk)

### [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) (SPSO)

Deals with complaints about organisations providing public services in Scotland, including colleges and universities. Telephone: 0800 377 7330

### [Skills Development Scotland](#) (SDS)

Skills Development Scotland (formerly Careers Scotland) has specialist advisers who support people with additional needs to take up education and training opportunities. You may wish to speak to an adviser if you have an additional support need that might affect your career choice. Specialist advisers will help you make the most of your skills and strengths when looking for a career.

Telephone: 0800 917 8000

[My World of Work](#) – online resources and information to explore careers, look for jobs and opportunities and search for suitable courses and training.

### [Student Awards Agency Scotland](#) (SAAS)

Awards funding to students taking higher education courses in colleges and universities including the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Telephone: 0300 555 0505 (press option 2)

Email: [SAAS\\_4@gov.scot](mailto:SAAS_4@gov.scot)

### [Student Information Scotland](#)

National student information portal providing information for Scottish residents on the full range of funding options to study at colleges and universities.

### [UCAS](#)

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is a UK-based organisation whose main role is to operate the application process for British universities. Visit the [UCAS website](#) to find out more.

### [Universities in Scotland](#)

Find details of all universities in Scotland on the [Universities Scotland website](#).