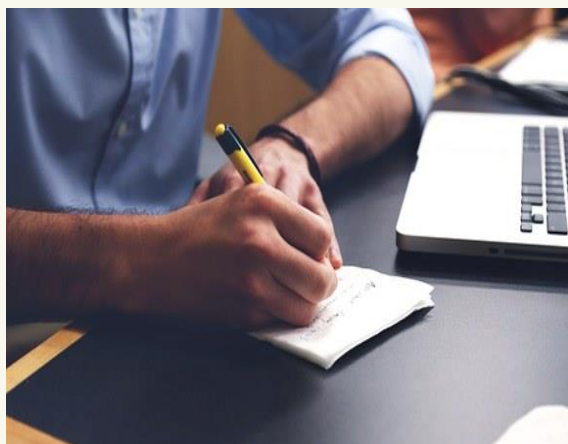




Disabled Students' Allowance Factsheet



About Disabled Students' Allowance

Are you disabled, have a mental or physical health condition or additional learning support needs?

If so, your college or university have a legal duty to support you and reduce or remove any barriers you might face while you are learning and studying.

Support could include getting extra time to complete your exams, offering you specialist equipment or providing you with an educational support worker.

If you are studying at Higher National Certificate (HNC) Level or above, you may also be able to claim extra funding to support you to learn.

This extra funding is called Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). DSA is available regardless of how much income or savings you have, it does not need to be paid back and it does not affect any benefits or other student funding you get.

It is provided by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) if you are ordinarily resident in Scotland.



DSA is split into three parts:



- **The Basic Allowance**

This is for items such as extra photocopying, braille or Livescribe paper and ink cartridges. The maximum amount each year is **£1,725** (pro rata for part time study).

- **The Large Items Allowance**

This is for items such as assistive technology, specialist software, laptops, scanners and printers. The maximum amount is **£5,160** for the whole of your course of study (not per year).





- **The Non-medical Personal Help Allowance**

This is for any course related personal assistance you need. For example, sign language interpreters or communication assistants, proof readers or autism/mental health mentors. The maximum amount each year is **£20,520** (pro rata for part time study).

[Click here to read the SAAS guide to the non-medical personal help allowance.](#)

How to apply

If you are applying for DSA for the first time, follow the below steps. The whole process of applying for DSA and arranging support can take a few months to arrange, so it's really important you don't wait until your course starts before you apply.

Applications for DSA open every year around the end of April. This is a quick guide to the process, [please follow this link for the full SAAS guidance notes on applying for DSA](#). Although most colleges and universities will not start to process your DSA application until you have a confirmed offer, some will, so contact the institution you are expecting to attend to discuss it with them as early as possible.

Step 1: Speak to an adviser

Speak to a Disability Advisor at the college or university to discuss the impact your impairment or health condition might have on your learning and studying. Each college and university will have a Disability Services department, but they may have slightly different names, such as 'Learning Support', 'Supported Learning' or the 'Inclusion Team'. Continue to [Step 2](#).

Step 2: Your appointment

If the Disability Advisor thinks you are likely to be eligible for DSA, they will invite you to come in for an appointment, unless you are a distance learning or Open University (OU) student, in which case skip to [Step 6](#). You may have to wait until after you have a confirmed offer for this appointment. When you go to the appointment, make sure you take an [accepted form of medical evidence \(page 8\)](#), or ask a medical professional to complete [this medical evidence form](#). Remember that even if you are not eligible for DSA, your college or university still have a duty to provide you with support. Continue to [Step 3](#).

Step 3: Needs assessment

If your college or university is validated to carry out needs assessments, then this will happen during your appointment. A needs assessment looks at what support, adjustments and equipment you might require while you are studying. [Click here to see which colleges and universities in Scotland are validated to carry out needs assessments](#). Skip to [Step 5](#) if your college or university is not validated to carry out needs assessments, otherwise continue to [Step 4](#).

Step 4: The DSA form

After the needs assessment, the assessor will support you to complete the DSA form as they need to sign it and fill part of it in themselves. They will also produce a needs assessment report, stating what support and equipment they recommend for you. The assessor will let you review this, to make sure you agree with what they are recommending. They will then send the form and the report, along with a photocopy of your medical evidence, to SAAS. Now go to [Step 8](#).

Step 5: If your College/University can't carry out assessments

If your college or university is not validated to carry out needs assessments, the Disability Advisor will support you to complete the DSA form at your appointment, leaving the recommendations section blank, and instead ticking the box requesting a referral for a needs assessment at an Access Centre. There are three Access Centres in Scotland including Dundee University, Edinburgh College and New College Lanarkshire. You may also be able to request a home appointment if you cannot attend an access centre for reasons related to your impairment. The Disability Advisor will send the form to SAAS along with a photocopy of your medical evidence. [Skip to Step 7.](#)

Step 6: If you are a distance learning/Open University student

If you are a distance learning/OU student, the Disability Advisor will provide guidance on filling in the DSA form over the phone or on skype. They will then ask you to send the form to them along with a photocopy of [accepted medical evidence \(page 8\)](#) or [this completed medical evidence form](#). When the disability advisor receives your DSA form, they will complete their part, sign it and send it off to SAAS along with your medical evidence. SAAS will then make a referral for you to have a needs assessment at an Access Centre. A needs assessment looks at what support, adjustments and equipment you might require while you are studying. There are three Access Centres in Scotland including Dundee University, Edinburgh College and New College Lanarkshire. If you are studying at the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI), you may be able to have your assessment carried out via video conferencing, discuss this with your Disability Advisor. You may also be able to request a home appointment if you are unable to attend an Access Centre for reasons related to your impairment. [Continue to Step 7.](#)

Step 7: Report for SAAS

You should receive a letter/email/phone call from the Access Centre with an appointment to go in for your needs assessment. After your needs assessment, the Assessor will produce a report for SAAS, recommending what support and equipment you will need, and you will have a chance to review this before they send it off to SAAS. [Continue to Step 8.](#)

Step 8: Your Award Letter

If your application for DSA is successful, you will receive an award letter in the post from SAAS, confirming what funding for support and equipment they will provide. [Read the DSA guidance notes](#) or speak to your Disability Advisor to find out when and how you will get the money and what you need to know about purchasing equipment and arranging non-medical personal help support.

Further Information

You can download the [DSA application form here](#). Make sure you download and print off the correct form as there are two versions, depending on your circumstances.

If you have any questions about applying for DSA, then you can contact the SAAS helpline on: **0300 555 0505** and then press option 1.



Funding your future

You can also contact the [Lead Scotland Disabled Students' Helpline](#) about DSA or with any other queries related to being disabled in post-school learning on Freephone: **0800 999 2568**.



We are open from 10am-12pm on Tuesdays and Fridays and 2pm-4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

You can also email us at: info@lead.org.uk

BSL users can get in touch with us or with SAAS by using Scotland's British Sign Language Interpreting Video Relay Service (VRS), [Contact Scotland](#), which is available to any BSL user with a smartphone or desktop PC with a webcam, and the Contact Scotland app.



We also have a [full range of guides related to post-school learning and disability available on our website here](#).