



## **Financial Support for Higher Education - Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)**

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats where appropriate by contacting 0161 770 6666 for further information please see our detailed fact sheet Information for all.

### **What is this service?**

The Student Support Section carries out eligibility and financial assessments for student loans, tuition fees and grants.

### **Who is the service for?**

If you live in Oldham, will be studying in higher education and are applying for financial support and if you have a disability or specific learning difficulty.

### **What should I do if this service is for me?**

Firstly, you should discuss your needs with your institutional disability adviser.

Disability advisers are available at most higher education institutions and play an important role in the DSA process.

The role of disability advisers may vary between institutions but generally they will:

- Help students with their DSA applications;
- Offer disabled students advise on other sources of funding and support that may be available;
- Arrange DSA assessments on behalf of students;
- Advise on the particular needs that may arise from specific courses;
- Help put in place the support that is recommended in the DSA assessment report;

- Explain and give advice on educational psychologists reports and DSA assessment reports;
- Co-ordinate the network of support workers;
- Work with Accommodation Services, Social Services, Oldham Local Authority (LA) and academic departments;
- Make recommendations for the academic department in relation to students, for example, special exam arrangements;
- Supervise and arrange training for support workers;
- Research, develop and help put into practice institutions' policies for exams, physical access and fieldwork; and
- Develop and put into practice disability elements of various institutional strategies.

## **How do I show that I am eligible?**

The Local Authority (LA) must consider all cases where students face extra costs to attend their course because of their disability or specific Learning difficulty.

If you have a physical disability, a mental-health difficulty or a specific Learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you may qualify.

If your condition has been documented at an earlier stage, your eligibility for DSAs can be easily proved, but a previous assessment of a specific Learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, may need to be updated.

However, you will need to satisfy the LA that the effects of your condition will mean that you will need to pay extra costs in studying the course.

If you have mental-health difficulties, you will need to provide medical proof of your disability, such as a letter from your doctor or specialist.

If you have more than one medical condition, you should provide evidence for all of them.

## **What about if I have a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia)?**

If you have a specific learning difficulty, the Local Authority will need evidence of this from a suitably qualified person. When students with a specific learning difficulty apply for DSAs, it is recommended that the Local Authority accepts any full diagnostic assessment that has been carried out since they were 16.

As part of the DSA assessment process, the Local Authority may ask you for an update of a previous diagnostic assessment to see what the likely effect of your specific Learning difficulty will have on the skills you need for higher education.

The Local Authority may ask you to have an independent assessment to establish your disability and eligibility for DSAs. The University or college disability adviser may be able to help you arrange an updated, or new assessment.

### **What about costs?**

The Local Authority cannot meet the costs of diagnosing your disability for establishing your eligibility for DSAs.

### **What evidence do I need to supply?**

Ask the Local Authority what evidence of your disability they will need before you send in your application. If you need a test to establish your eligibility for DSAs, but cannot afford the fee, you can apply to your university or college for help in meeting the costs through the Access to Learning Fund.

The university's or college's disability adviser may be able to help you with this.

### **How and to whom do I apply?**

If you are entering higher education for the first time in 2007/08 and are applying to the Local Authority for financial support, you will find that the application form asks if you have a disability. You can apply on paper using form PN1 (form PR1 if you are a continuing student)

PN1 forms are available from the Student Support section, from schools and colleges in Oldham (PR1 forms will be sent automatically to students from Student Finance Direct), or you can download a form from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Student Support website or complete an application on line at:

[www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/index.shtml)  
[www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)

## **For Part-time undergraduates**

If you are a part-time student and want to apply for DSAs, you should ask the Local Authority to send you the DSA1 application form. You can also download this from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides) or from the Student Finance Direct website at [www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)

## **For Postgraduates**

If you are a postgraduate student, you should ask the Local Authority to send you the DSA1 application form. You can also download this form the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides) or from the Student Finance Direct website at [www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)

## **For Open University students**

If, when you register for a course, you have told the Open University that you have a disability or specific learning disability, the OUs DSA office will automatically send you all the information you need to apply for a DSA.

## **When do I apply?**

Apply as soon as you can before your course starts in order to receive payments promptly. However, you can apply for DSAs at any stage of your course.

## **Where do I send my form?**

Student Support  
PO Box 40  
Civic Centre  
West St  
Oldham  
OL1 1XJ.

## **What happens next?**

The Local Authority will send you a DSA1 form for completing. You will need to return this form to the Local Authority with evidence of your disability.

Once the Local Authority has confirmed your eligibility for DSAs, they will then ask you to have a DSA assessment carried out so that the help you need on your course can be identified and arranged. Following your DSA assessment, the Local Authority will let you know the level of help you can have from DSAs.

## **How will payments be made?**

If your application is successful, the Local Authority will tell you the amount you can have from the DSA. Student Finance Direct will make DSA payments either to you, into your bank account, or directly to the supplier of equipment or services.

## **Do DSAs depend on my income?**

No, DSAs do not depend on your income or the income of your family.

## **What do the DSAs cover?**

DSAs are not paid as a set amount. The Local Authority will find out what you need and how much it will cost, usually by asking that you have a DSA assessment. You will only get enough money from the DSAs to cover the cost of the equipment or support you need because of your disability.

The amount of DSAs you receive will depend on the DSA assessment. If you are a part-time student, you will have to get certification from your higher education institution that your rate of study is at Least 50% of a full time course in order to be eligible, and to work out the rate of the non-medical helpers and general allowances.

However, there is a limit to the amount of help you can get from the DSAs. The rates shown below are the maximum you can get. They are meant to support people with a high level of need, so most people will get less than the maximum.

## **What allowances are available?**

### **For full-time undergraduate students (including distance learning students)**

#### **Special Equipment Allowance**

This allowance covers major items of equipment, the need for which arises from a disability, and which are necessary to enable a student to benefit fully from the course.

It is payable at any time during the course, by one or more installments, provided that the aggregated total of the payments does not exceed the maximum prescribed limit of £4905 for the course.

If it is more economical, items of equipment should be leased rather than purchased, especially if the claim is made during the latter stages of the course. Disabled students may find [www.abilitynet.co.uk](http://www.abilitynet.co.uk) an external site, of use and interest.

It provides impartial, expert advice about computer technology for people with disabilities.

### **Non-Medical Personal Helper's Allowance**

This allowance reimburses students up to a maximum of £12420 per annum for expenditure on personal helpers such as readers, lip speakers, note takers, non-medical carers, necessary for the student to benefit fully from the course.

The authority must be satisfied that the expenses are in respect the student's disability, and arise as a direct consequence of attendance on the course.

The provision of these allowances does not remove the duty of local Social Services to provide assistance towards personal care costs which would have been incurred irrespective of a student's attendance on a course.

### **General Disability Allowance**

This allowance has a maximum of £1640 per annum and provides for supplementary payments for disability related expenditure incurred because of attendance on the course.

The allowance may be used for miscellaneous expenditure not covered by the specific allowances and to supplement expenditure on non-medical helpers and/or special equipment in excess of the maxima of the specific allowances.

### **Travel for Disabled Students**

Reimbursement of travel expenses may also be claimed if, by reason of your disability, you incur additional expenditure. You will be asked to show how your disability incurs additional cost, and to provide medical evidence if necessary.

## **For part-time undergraduate students (including distance learning students) and relevant Open University students**

### ***Special Equipment Allowance***

Specialist equipment allowance – up to £4905 for the whole of your course

### ***Non-Medical Personal Helper's Allowance***

Non-medical helper's allowance as a percentage of the full time rate, according to the workload of a part-time course, up to £9135 a year. For example, for a student studying:

50% of a full-time course up to £6210 a year; or

60% of a full time course up to £7452 a year

### **General Disability Allowance**

General disabled students' allowance as a percentage of the full-time rate in the same way as the non-medical helper's allowance, to a maximum of £1230 a year.

### **Travel for Disabled Students**

As explained for full-time undergraduate students

## **For full-time and part-time postgraduate students, including relevant students, including relevant Open University students**

There is one allowance to meet all costs of up to £5915 a year for both full-time and part-time postgraduate students. You can use this for specialist equipment, non-medical personal helpers, extra travel costs or other course related costs. The amount of DSA you receive will depend on the DSA assessment.

### **How can I find out what I will need?**

The Local Authority will ask you to have a DSA assessment carried out. This is so that your particular needs can be matched with those of your proposed course so that you can get the help that you will need.

The DSA assessment will be carried out by a person with specialist experience at an independent assessment centre, or at a centre within your college or university.

## **What happens to the equipment when my course ends?**

All equipment bought with DSAs is, and will stay, your property.

## **Will I have to repay my DSAs if I Leave my course early?**

Possibly. The Local Authority may have to recover some or all of your DSAs if you withdraw from your course.

## **Where can I get more information?**

Skill: The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities  
Chapter House  
18-20 Crucifix Lane  
London SE1 3JW  
Phone: 0800 328 5050  
Minicom: 0800 068 2422  
Fax: 020 7450 0650  
E-mail: [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk)  
Website: [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

Skill is a national charity promoting opportunities for young people and adults in the UK with any kind of disability in further or higher education, training and employment.

Oldham Local Authority  
Student Support  
Po Box 40  
Civic Centre  
West Street  
Oldham  
OL1 1XJ

Phone: 0161 770 3352  
Minicom: 0161 222 6901  
Fax: 0161 770 4277  
Email: [ecs.student.support@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:ecs.student.support@oldham.gov.uk)

Department for Education and Skills – Web site  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport)

Student Loans Company – Web site [www.slco.uk](http://www.slco.uk) or  
[www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)

## Contact details for the Student Support Section:

Student Support Section  
PO Box 40  
Civic Centre  
West Street  
Oldham  
OL1 1XJ

Telephone: 0161 770 3352

Minicom: 0161 222 6901

Fax: 0161 770 4277

Email: [ecs.studentsupport@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:ecs.studentsupport@oldham.gov.uk)

Web site: <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/learning.htm>

Reception: ContactOldham

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 09:00 – 17:00

Wednesday 10:00 – 17:00

We want to provide good quality services for people in Oldham and as we are a public service you have a say in what we do. We want you to be completely satisfied with our services but to ensure this we need to know what you think. What we do best? Where could we improve things? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Only by listening to you can we give you the service you deserve.

If you wish to make a comment about our services you can email us on [customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk) or you can phone us on 0161 770 4191 or you can write to: Complaints Officer

Chief Executives Department  
PO Box 160  
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Oldham  
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