

A Brief Guide to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) 2020/21

What is the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)?

The DSA helps to pay for any extra costs or expenses that a student may incur as a result of their disability, in order to be able to access their studies. These may include specialist equipment (e.g. a computer and specialist software), non-medical helper support (eg: assistive technology training, 1-1 specialist study skills support, mentoring), general expenses (for printing and photocopying) and travel costs (e.g. taxi allowance). The allowance is not means-tested, is not repayable, does not affect benefits and there is no age limit. The funding is administered through Student Finance England (SFE), Student Finance Wales (SFW), Student Finance Northern Ireland (Student Finance NI), and Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), or other funding bodies such as a research council.

How do I apply?

The funding is for students who qualify for student finance from Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales, Student Finance Northern Ireland or the Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). For more information about eligibility, guides and application forms visit <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim> or phone Student Finance England 0300 100 0607 or textphone 0300 100 0622 (other details for Student Finance Wales, Student Finance Northern Ireland and Student Awards Agency Scotland are on the website). The DSA form to complete depends on your mode of study:

- Full-time undergraduates who are also applying for core funding (ie: tuition and maintenance loan) should use the DSA1 **slim** form
- Postgraduates, all part-time students or undergraduates who are not applying for core funding should use the DSA1 **full** form which must be countersigned by SOAS advisors or accompanied by an electronic signature by email.

When completing the course details section of your application if your funding provider is Student Finance England (SFE) you will need the Generic Degree Title on the Student Finance systems for a list of these see:

For PG students <https://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/funding/postgraduate-loans/applying/>

For UG students <https://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/fees/undergraduate/undergraduate-student-finance.html>

You will need to include medical evidence of your disability which must confirm your diagnosis, that the condition has lasted or is likely to last a year or more, and give details of the adverse impacts on your daily life including education; or, if you have a Specific Learning Difference (SpLD) such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or ADHD, an educational psychologist's or specialist professional's diagnostic assessment. The post address for returning applications to Student Finance England is PO Box 210, Darlington, DL1 9HJ. Please contact disabilities@soas.ac.uk if you would like assistance.

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Confirmation of Eligibility for DSA

After you have submitted your application you will receive a letter from your Student Finance provider confirming your eligibility for DSA and authorising you to proceed with a Needs Assessment (see list of Needs Assessments Centres below). You must take a copy of the letter and your medical evidence or Educational Psychologist's report to the appointment with the assessor. If you have received DSA before, you should also take copies of previous assessments.

What is a Needs Assessment?

Needs Assessments are carried out by independent assessors who are managed by a Regional Assessment Centre. During your assessment you will be asked about the difficulties you have encountered with previous studies due to your disability, medical condition or SpLD. The assessor will also consider the particular demands of your course and try to anticipate any problems which may arise. They will explain, demonstrate and agree a series of recommendations for your support and detail the equipment, training, support workers, travel expenses and other strategies which are deemed necessary during your course.

How do I book a Study Needs Assessment?

The following are some Assessment Centres based near SOAS. However for full listings in Greater London and regionally please visit <https://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/students/find-assessment-centre>

Access 1st

50 Broadway, St.James's Park, London SW1H 0RG

Tel: 020 7222 4877

Email: admin@access-1st.co.uk

www.access-1st.co.uk

Central London Assessment Services (CLASS)

1st Floor, Cavendish House, 101 New Cavendish Street, London W1W 6XH

Tel: 0800 015 3158

Email: dsa@westminster.ac.uk

www.blog.westminster.ac.uk/class/

Kingston Assessment Services (KAS) Tottenham Court Road Centre

85 Tottenham Court Road London W1T 4TQ

Tel: 020 3732 2088

Text: 07730 691 642

Email: admin@kas.uk.net

www.kas.uk.net

North London Regional Access Centre (NLRAC) Bloomsbury Access Centre

IALS University of London, Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square. London WC1B 5DR

Tel: 020 8411 5366

Email: adminac@mdx.ac.uk

www.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/north-london-regional-access-centre

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Your Needs Assessment report

After the appointment, the assessor will write up their recommendations for you in a detailed report, a copy of which is sent to you, to your Student Finance provider and, with your consent, to the SOAS Disability Advisors at disabilities@soas.ac.uk. On average this takes two weeks but may be longer at busy times or if your report is complex. You will have the opportunity to read and make any comments before it is finalised.

Notification of Entitlement from your Student Finance provider

You will then receive a letter from your Student Finance provider confirming that they have received the report and approved the recommendations. This may take up to four weeks, but please let the SOAS Disability Office know if it is taking longer and we will contact the finance provider if you would like us to. Please ensure that you read the letter carefully and understand any stipulations they make. If the funding provider does not approve all of your assessor's recommendations please contact the assessment centre for advice.

How do I access support and funds from my DSA

The letter from Student Finance provider will give you instructions on how to arrange your support and order any equipment etc. If you require any help with this process, please contact disabilities@soas.ac.uk. Please be aware that you need to keep receipts for any DSA General and Travel Allowance expenses that have been authorised (these may include photocopying, printer ink and paper, taxis) so you can submit claims to your funding provider for reimbursement during the year.

You can order computer equipment (see **Note**), and have Assistive Technology (AT) training before the start of your course, but you will have to repay the cost if you do not enrol (other support can only be accessed after enrolment). If you wish to upgrade your computer equipment or use an alternative support provider you may contact your funding provider to agree this, within the approved cost limits.

Please note: If you have been recommended a computer by the DSA You will have to pay your equipment supplier the first £200 towards the cost of your computer. However, if needed, you can apply to SOAS for reimbursement by emailing advice@soas.ac.uk, attaching a copy of your DSA Letter of Entitlement and giving your bank details (account number and sort code).

Do I need to renew my DSA after the first year?

You will need to renew your DSA every year to continue receiving support such as general and travel allowances, non-medical helper support and, potentially, additional equipment.

- Full-time undergraduates reapplying for core funding (student loan) just need to indicate on their loan application each year by ticking the box to say that they are also applying for DSA
- Everyone else (undergraduates who are not receiving student loan or have changed their course in any way, all part-time students, postgraduates) should complete the full DSA1

application form but you don't need to re-submit your evidence. This form needs to be countersigned by us or accompanied by an electronic signature by email.

Any queries?

If you have any queries about the DSA please ask for advice from the disability team at SOAS

Postal address: Disability Advisor, Student Advice and Wellbeing Department, SL48, SOAS
(University of London), Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG **Email:**
disabilities@soas.ac.uk

Please contact us if you require this leaflet in an alternative format.

