

A Brief Guide for Students with Mental Health Issues 2020/21

Do Mental Health Issues count as a disability?

The Equality Act 2010 (EA) defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to perform day to day activities. We welcome students with Mental Health Issues at SOAS and encourage you to contact our Disability Advisors so that we can provide advice and discuss how we can support you.

What does the Disability and Neurodiversity Team (DNT) do?

We put in place any agreed adjustments you may require to enable you to study successfully at SOAS. These might include:

- An individual Study Inclusion Plan (SIP)
- Exam arrangements
- Library services, for example: quiet study rooms, extended loans, scanning
- Advice on disability-related funding for study (Disabled Students Allowance)
- Specialist help, for example: professional mentoring and mental health advice
- Priority accommodation
- Emergency Evacuation plans and campus accessibility
- Assistive Technology resources, for example: training and loan equipment

DNT also work in collaboration with different departments and our academic members of staff to ensure accessibility for our disabled students and to actively promote and develop inclusion.

What about confidentiality?

We would like to assure you that SOAS will treat your sensitive personal information with the utmost confidentiality. To enable the Disability Service to arrange adjustments and coordinate your support we may need to share some limited information with other departments at SOAS or external agencies. In line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, this would only be with your explicit consent on our Confidentiality Agreement.

What external funding is available for disabled students?

If you qualify for student finance from Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales, Student Finance Northern Ireland or the Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) you may also be eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). This funding can pay for extra costs you incur when you are studying because of your condition. This might include IT equipment (eg. a computer or Assistive Technology software), Assistive Technology training, mentoring, or study skills tutoring and travel costs. To apply for DSA you complete an application form, provide evidence of your disability and attend a needs assessment. For more details and to apply online visit <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim> For Student Finance England phone 0300 100 0607 or textphone 0300 100 0622 (other details for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the website). Please contact our Disability Advisors if you would like help with your application.

Although International students are not eligible for the DSA, SOAS will still provide all the support and adjustments for you that we can. (See above 'What does the Disability and Neurodiversity Team do' and also below, 'What facilities are available to ALL students at SOAS')

Student Advice and Wellbeing Support for ALL students at SOAS

- In-house Wellbeing Service which can provide time-limited counselling, groups, workshops or Silvercloud online guided self-help accessed via daily bookable online chats if we are providing our services remotely, or during drop-ins if we are providing services on campus (see website for times)
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing Support, co-ordinated by our Mental Health and Wellbeing advisors. For support with managing your wellbeing, book a check-in meeting. For practical strategies for managing yourself and your studies, we offer Professional Mentoring sessions bookable on the day or appointments bookable in advance.
 - Opportunities for peer support groups and personal development workshops
- For more details see <https://www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/>

Additionally, for ALL students at SOAS we have:

Specialist software on all SOAS PCs for student use: ClaroRead (a screen reading, spelling and grammar programme) and Mind Manager (a mind-mapping programme)

- The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching department (CILT) provide self-help study resources online, workshops on essay-writing, reading and more, see <https://www.soas.ac.uk/cilt/>
- Induction Loop Systems are provided in the large lecture theatres at SOAS and portable loop systems at reception points across the school

Student Accommodation

If you feel that due to the impact of your mental health issues you need to live in halls of residence, please contact our Disability Advisors for advice and provide evidence of your disability and requirements so we can make a request for your application to be given priority.

There are two halls of residence for SOAS students, Dinwiddy House (undergraduates) and Paul Robeson House (postgraduates) as well as the Intercollegiate Halls owned by the University of London. All applications for these are through Sanctuary Student Housing – please visit www.sanctuary-students.com/London for more details. For other alternatives please see our website at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/accommodation/>

Maintaining Health and Wellbeing

We encourage you to speak to your current GP or specialist regarding future arrangements for accessing support for your health needs, such as community mental health services and medication. If you are moving away from home to study you should also discuss with them whether to transfer your care to a new GP and/or community mental health team or to continue with your home practice. It is important to arrange any support you need to manage your health prior to taking on the demands of study. You can find information about the GP practice nearest to where you will be living by going to <https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4>

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What do I need to do next?

- Visit our website <https://www.soas.ac.uk/disability/> for more information
- Send us your medical evidence and completed [confidentiality agreement](#) and any previous DSA needs assessment report and DSA letter of entitlement (if you have them). Scan and email these to disabilities@soas.ac.uk or you can post to our address below.
- We will then ask you to make an appointment to see a Disability Advisor (Angela Axon or Anastasia Pateraki) to arrange your support and prepare your Study Inclusion Plan
- There are also opportunities to speak with an advisor during their 'On The Day' bookable brief on-line chats if we are providing our services remotely, or during drop-ins if we are providing services on campus (see website for times). These are for brief enquiries and are held during term time only. You can also email us at disabilities@soas.ac.uk

Postal address: Disability Advisor, Student Advice and Wellbeing Department, Room 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.

Other Brief Guides are available for students with Disabilities and for students with SpLDs (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD)

SOAS Disability and Neurodiversity Team.