

Notes for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) application 2018-2019

If you would prefer, we can give you a version of these notes, as well as the DSA application forms, in the following formats:

- Braille
- Large print
- Audio

Student Awards Agency Scotland
Saughton House
Broomhouse
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT

CONTENTS

Section 1 – about the Disabled Students' Allowance

Introduction	Page 3
Eligibility	Page 3
Residency eligibility	Page 3
Course eligibility	Page 3
The allowances	Page 4
Allowances – basic allowance	Page 5
Allowances – large items allowance	Page 5
Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)	Page 6
Travel	Page 6
Reasonable adjustments	Page 7

Section 2 – how to apply for DSA

Introduction	Page 7
What do we require?	Page 7
Filling in the DSA form	Page 8
Diagnosis/medical evidence	Page 8
Payment of diagnosis	Page 9
Assessment of needs	Page 9
Main funding application	Page 10
How we use the information you give us	Page 10
Paying DSA	Page 10
Purchasing equipment	Page 11
Overpayments	Page 11
Fraud	Page 12
Processing times	Page 12
Appeals and complaints to SAAS	Page 13
Appealing against recommendations in your needs assessment	Page 13

Section 3 – FAQs and contact details

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	Page 14
Contact us	Page 16
Other useful contacts	Page 16

Section 1 – about the Disabled Students' Allowance

Introduction

The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is a non-income assessed allowance to cover any extra costs or expenses you might have while studying, which arise because of your disability. You do not need to be claiming tuition fees and/or living-costs funding from us in order to claim DSA.

We have divided these notes into three sections. Section one gives you more information about what you can claim under DSA, section two explains how to apply for DSA and section three contains FAQs, contact details and other sources of helpful information.

Eligibility

To be eligible for DSA you must meet our eligibility criteria. More information about this can be found below.

Residence eligibility

Our residence eligibility conditions are set out in the Students' Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

To meet our residence conditions, you must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before the first day of the first academic year of your course (the relevant date) and ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date. For the majority of students who start their course in the autumn term, the relevant date is 1 August. You must also be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 on the relevant date.

If you do not meet the residence conditions set out above, you may still be eligible for funding in certain circumstances. Residency can be complicated; if you have any doubts about your eligibility, you should phone our helpline on 0300 555 0505 for advice. You can find further information about residency on our website at www.saas.gov.uk

Course eligibility

If you are on one of the following courses, providing you meet our residence eligibility conditions, you can apply for DSA:

- HNC
- HND
- Degree or equivalent level courses
- Foundation year of a degree course, providing you have enrolled for the whole course and not just the foundation year and the foundation year is a necessary and compulsory part of the course
- Diploma or degree in nursing or midwifery
- Full-time post graduate courses including PhDs (providing you are not eligible to receive DSA or equivalent support from another source)
- Part-time post graduate courses including PhDs (providing you are undertaking at least 50% of the length of the full-time course, and you are not eligible to receive DSA or equivalent funding from another source)

- Part-time undergraduate courses at HNC level or above (providing you are undertaking at least 50% of the length of the full-time course)
- Distance learning courses (providing you are undertaking at least 50% of the length of a full-time course)
- Open University courses (providing you are studying at least 60 credits in a year)

If you meet one or more of the following, you **may not be entitled** to claim DSA funding:

- You are an EU student receiving a tuition fees only award
- Studying less than 50% of the length of a full-time course
- On an Open University course and undertaking less than 60 credits
- Undertaking a course below HNC level
- Receiving funding from your Local Education Authority, Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales or Student Finance Northern Ireland
- You are receiving funding from a Research Council, the Social Work Department or any other UK publicly funded award-making body
- On a work-based learning course
- On an access course
- On an HNC, HND or degree level courses that we have not designated as eligible for funding
- Do not meet the residence requirements, as detailed above

If you are not entitled to funding from the DSA, you might still be eligible for funding from your college or university. You should speak to your Disability Advisor for advice.

The allowances

The DSA is made up of three parts:



1. The basic allowance



2. The large items allowance



3. The Non-Medical Personal Help allowance (NMPH)

1. Allowances – basic allowance

Basic allowance	
How often is it paid?	The basic allowance can be claimed on an annual basis for the duration of your studies.
What is covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopying • Printer cartridges • Internet costs • Braille or Livescribe paper • USB memory sticks • Special dietary requirements
What is not covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptations to course hand outs • General stationery items such as pens and folders.
How much can I get?	The rate for full-time students in session 2018-2019 is £1,725. For part-time students, the allowance is pro rata. For example, if you are studying for 50% of a full-time course, you will be entitled to £863 (50% of the basic allowance).

2. Allowances – large items allowance

Large items allowance	
How often is it paid?	The large items allowance covers the duration of your studies.
What is it for? (examples)	<p>The allowance can include the purchase or hire of items such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability related software (e.g. Dragon voice recognition software) • Printers/ scanners • Laptops/ Personal Computers (PC's) • Ergonomic equipment
What is not covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course specific equipment e.g. cameras for photography students • Course specific software • Wheelchairs/ mobility scooters • Any equipment that an institution would be reasonably expected to provide under the Equality Act (2010) e.g. wheelchair access
How much can I get?	The rate for all students in session 2018-2019 is £5,160.

3. Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)

Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)	
How often is it paid?	NMPH can be claimed on an annual basis for the duration of your studies.
What is covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Sign Language interpreters (BSL) • Tactile BSL • Note takers/ scribes • Proof readers • Mentors • IT training • Study skills support • Mobility support
What is not covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject specific tuition • Support that would normally be provided by Social Services • Asfedic tuning or similar diagnostic services
How much can I get?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2018-2019, the rate for full-time students is £20,520. • For part-time students, the allowance is pro rata e.g., if you are studying for 50% of a full time course you will be entitled to £10,260 (50% of the NMPH allowance).

More information about using a non-medical personal helper is available in our booklet [DSA NMPH allowance guide](#). You can download a copy of this from the 'forms and guides' section of our website at www.saas.gov.uk.

Travel

Students who incur additional travel costs as a result of their disability may be eligible to apply for travel expenses.

If, as a direct result of your disability, you are unable to use any kind of public transport (such as buses, coaches and trains), we may be able to cover the cost of return journey's between your term time address and your college/ university by private car or taxi. For example: if you have visual or mobility related difficulties which restrict your ability to travel by public transport.

We will ask you to provide evidence confirming your circumstances in support of your DSA application. This may include evidence from a medical professional.

Any travel costs you are entitled to will be calculated using:

- Number of miles between your term time address and your college/ university
- Number of days you attend college/ university per week
- Number of weeks you are in attendance
- Cost of each journey

We will not typically provide travel costs for students who have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service or financial hardship.

Please note, nursing students may not claim travel expenses through both the DSA **and** the Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (NMSB) Scheme.

Reasonable adjustments

The [public sector Equality Duty](#) came into effect across the UK in 2011. It means that public bodies, including colleges and universities, have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It also requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Colleges and universities should therefore continually anticipate and address the general requirements of disabled people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions e.g. ensure that facilities have wheelchair access.

If we feel that any part of a DSA claim is something that we should consider as a 'reasonable adjustment' for a college or university, we may refuse that element of support. For example, if you need to use a specially adapted desk or chair while at college or university or you need course hand outs in a non-standard format.

Section 2 – How to apply for DSA

Introduction

Applications will be available to download from our website www.saas.gov.uk in April. Or, you can collect one from your college or university. To make sure your funding is available for you at the start of your course, you should apply as soon as possible. **The closing date for applications is 31 March 2019**

What do we require?

We will need the following documents if you are applying for DSA:

- A DSA application form
- Evidence confirming your circumstances in support of your DSA application. This may include evidence from a medical professional.
- A needs assessment report

Please note: If you are a full-time student and you also wish to apply for tuition fees and/ or living cost support, you must provide a main student funding application before we can assess your eligibility to DSA. You can apply online at www.saas.gov.uk

Filling in the DSA form

We have two DSA application forms.

- DSA Full Time (DSAFT) form for full-time students who are applying to us for tuition fees, bursary, loan or living-costs grants.
- DSA Only (DSAO) form for students who are part-time, distance learning or are studying full-time but are not applying to us for tuition fees, bursary, loan and living-costs grants.

You should fill in all sections of the form and your Disability Advisor should fill in the support details section.

When filling in the form you should make sure that:

- you fill in the form in CAPITAL letters using **black** ink
- **you provide details of a valid bank or building society account. You should provide bank details even if you have already given them to us on your main funding application – We cannot process your DSA award without them**
- you read and understand the student consent section
- you have signed and dated the form
- your assessor or Disability Advisor signs the form
- you send clear **photocopies** of supporting documents, such as your educational psychologist report (please do not send originals)
- if you are a part-time or distance-learning student, your college or university fills in the certificate of endorsement section

If you do not do all of the above, it could delay processing your application.

Remember:

- Your application is only valid for one academic year of study. You should apply for DSA in each year of your course.
- You should inform us if there is any change in your circumstances that might affect your eligibility to support. For example, if you decide to change your course or leave your course before you have finished it.

Diagnosis/medical evidence

In the first year that you apply for DSA, you will be asked to provide supporting documents to confirm your disability or learning difficulty (please send us photocopies and not originals). If your disability changes during your course and you require additional support as a result, we will request that you provide additional documentation to confirm your circumstances. We have provided some examples of the documentation we require below:

For dyslexia or specific learning difficulties, a statement or report from one of the following:

- An educational psychologist or appropriately qualified professional
- A letter from a previous educational establishment that you attended, such as a school or college, confirming that you have been diagnosed with dyslexia or a specific learning difficulty by an educational psychologist or appropriately qualified professional.

For other medical conditions, we will request diagnostic evidence which confirms the impact your disability has on your ability to study. We can accept diagnostic evidence from qualified professionals such as:

- GP
- Nurse/psychiatric nurse
- Occupational therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Audiologist
- Hospital Consultant

Please note that the above is not a complete list. If you have evidence from a professional that we have not listed above or you are not sure if we will accept the evidence you have, you can contact us for further advice. It is not always necessary for the evidence you give us to be recent if the nature of your condition will not change. However, we reserve the right to ask you for evidence which confirms the current status of your condition if we feel this is necessary.

Payment of diagnosis

We will not pay for the cost of any diagnosis (including doctors' letters and educational psychologists' reports). However, your college or university may be able to help you meet the cost of such from their Discretionary Funds. You should contact them for advice.

Assessment of needs

A Needs Assessment is a report carried out by a qualified individual who lets us know the type of support and equipment you need to undertake your course.

All students applying for the DSA for the first time must have a needs assessment. Your institution may also request that a new needs assessment is necessary if:

- a significant period of time has passed since your original assessment took place;
- your disability or medical condition has changed
- you change course, or start a new course, and your needs have changed as a result of this.

Many colleges and universities have trained staff who can carry out needs assessments on behalf of their own students. However, if there is no one at your college or university who can do this, we will refer you to an Access Centre near where you live or study.

We will pay for the cost of your needs assessment. We will not take this amount from your DSA allowance. If you have to travel for an assessment, you may have to pay such costs yourself.

Please note that Access Centres will not normally give you an appointment for a needs assessment unless we have referred you to them.

Once we have referred you for a needs assessment the Access Centre will then contact you to arrange an appointment.

Main funding application

If you are applying to us for tuition fee and/or living cost support, you must submit an application for your main student funding before or at the same time as you apply for DSA. We will not be able to process your DSA application until we have processed your application for your main funding.

You can fill out an application on-line at www.saas.gov.uk from April 2018. The closing date for applications is 31 March 2019. Please make sure that you apply before this date, as we will not accept late applications.

You do not need to submit a main student funding application if you are applying for DSA only.

How we use the information that you give us

We are governed by the Data Protection Act 1998, and from the 25 May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulations

We will use the information you give us on your form to process your application for the DSA. We have a duty to protect the public funds we handle and we may use the information you have given on this form to prevent and detect fraud. We may also share this information for the same purpose with other organisations that handle public funds.

We need the information you give us to work out whether you are eligible for funding and we are the data controller for that information. We will assess your entitlement and send you a letter to tell you how much funding you will get from us. We keep your personal information so we can audit our assessment of student funding.

Where necessary, we will pass the information you give us on your DSA application form (and any other evidence you give us) to an Access Centre or to your college or university if they are approved to carry out needs assessments. They will use this to work out what equipment or help you need to do your course. They will send us a full report detailing your needs and how much it will cost.

Paying DSA

We will pay your main DSA award straight into your bank or building society. You should provide valid bank or building society details on your DSA application form, even if you have already given us bank details on your application for your main funding. We cannot make DSA payments by cash or cheque.

If you are eligible to receive Non-Medical Personal Help and you choose to employ your own support worker, we will pay you in arrears. You are responsible for then paying your helper. If you use a helper that your college, university or an agency provides, we will pay the helper direct. More information about how we pay for NMPH is available in our booklet DSA NMPH allowance guide. You can download a copy from our website www.saas.gov.uk.

Purchasing equipment

We anticipate that you will purchase the equipment which has been agreed and recommended by your needs assessor. If you are not happy with the recommendations made in your assessment you should contact your assessor to discuss this before purchasing any equipment, see the section – Appealing against a needs assessment on page 16 for more information.

Students may wish to upgrade some of the items recommended, particularly in the case of computer hardware. This is acceptable provided the assessor or their disability advisor approves the change. However, any associated costs must be borne by the student. Students are unable to use savings made through sourcing recommended items at a lower price to fund the upgrade of another piece of equipment.

If you choose to purchase equipment which has not been recommended by your assessor, we will not cover this cost. This will mean we have paid you money you are not entitled to and will ask you to pay this back. Please see the 'overpaid' section below for more details.

Overpayments

We have a duty to protect the UK public funds we handle. In your application, we will ask you to agree to pay back any money we have paid you that you are no longer entitled to. We may ask you to do this if:

- your circumstances, as described in your application, change;
- you purchase items that are not recommended in your needs assessment report;
- you do not provide receipts for the items you have purchased;
- you fail to meet the conditions of funding set out in the Students' Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (as amended);
- Scottish Ministers decide to change the amount of your funding; or
- Scottish Ministers find that you should not have received funding.

If you receive money that you are not entitled to, we will ask you to set up a suitable repayment plan and make regular payments until you have paid us the full amount we have asked you to pay back.

You must tell us if there is any change in your circumstances which may affect any award due to you.

If you have been overpaid and would like to discuss payment options, please contact our DSA team on SAAS_4@gov.scot.

Fraud

You must send us copies of receipts for **all** items you purchase under the DSA. If you don't give us receipts or the amount on your receipts is less than the amount we awarded you, we will ask you to pay back the amount of money we gave you that is more than you are entitled to.

You must send us receipts for any items you purchase, using the large items allowance, within 6 weeks of making the purchase. You can send us receipts for any consumable items over the course of the year as you use it, or altogether at the end of the session.

If you have employed your helper direct, both you and your helper must sign all NMPH invoices. Again, if we pay you more than the NMPH award you are entitled to, we will ask you to pay this back.

If you apply for DSA in a subsequent year and you have not given us all of the receipts for your previous DSA award, we may withhold any further awards of DSA until we receive your receipts.

We take all aspects of fraud seriously and have a dedicated fraud team to deal with any cases that arise. We will aim to recover any money we pay, that we later find out, we have paid as the result of a fraudulent claim. We will prosecute anybody who makes a fraudulent claim for funding.

Processing times

We have the following response times and processing targets:

DSA forms

- Process all fully filled in DSA application forms within 21 calendar days
- Process all fully filled in needs assessment reports within 21 days

Written correspondence and emails

- Respond to all DSA written correspondence within 21 days
- Respond to all emails within 21 days
- Pay all invoices for NMPH within 21 days

Other

- Deal with any requests under Freedom of Information (FOI) within 20 working days
- Respond to all correspondence clearly marked 'complaint' within 14 days
- Respond to all correspondence clearly marked 'appeal' within 14 days

If you do not receive a reply from us within 28 calendar days, you should contact us to make sure we have received your application form or correspondence.

Our appeals and complaints procedures

Students Appealing against our assessment of a DSA application

If a student wishes to make a formal request to review our decision they can submit a formal appeal directly to SAAS. Further details regarding our appeals process are available on the SAAS website http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact_us/appeals.htm

You can make an appeal in writing to:

Student Awards Agency Scotland
Complaints and Appeals Team
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT

Or by email to: SAASComplaints_Appeals@gov.scot

How to make a complaint

We are committed to providing a high-quality customer service. We want to know if something goes wrong or you are not satisfied with our service.

If you wish to make a complaint you can do so in person, by phone, in writing or by email. Further details regarding our complaints process are available on the SAAS website http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact_us/complaints.htm

You can make a complaint in writing to:

Student Awards Agency Scotland
Complaints and Appeals Team
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT

By email: SAASComplaints_Appeals@gov.scot

Clearly mark any letter or email 'Complaint'

By telephone: 0300 555 0505

Students Appealing against a needs assessment

If a student wishes to appeal against the recommendations in their needs assessment they should first of all appeal directly to the organisation that carried out their assessment. The organisation that provided the assessment should provide the student with a copy of their appeals process. If they are not happy with their response we can appoint an Independent Arbitrator to look at the assessment, but only once the appeals procedure at the access centre or institution has been exhausted.

Section 1 – Frequently Asked Questions and contact details

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do I find out what equipment or support I need?

If you need advice about equipment or other types of support you should first contact the Disability Advisor at your college or university.

What happens once you have approved my claim for DSA?

We will send you a letter letting you know what we have agreed to pay for. We will also send a copy of this letter to the disability advisor at your institution and/or the Access Centre who carried out your assessment (provided you have given us your consent to do this on your application form).

Can I still apply for DSA even if I am near the end of my course?

Providing you apply before the application closing date (31st March), we will consider your claim for DSA. However, the funding that we are able to offer you may be limited depending on the length of time remaining on your course. For example, we may not approve the purchase of equipment if you are able to borrow the items you need from your college, university or a private company.

Can I buy different items/equipment to the ones that you have approved?

If you are unhappy with the equipment that has been recommend for you, you should contact your disability advisor to discuss this before purchasing alternative items/equipment.

Can I buy equipment before my course begins?

When we have processed your application, we will write to you to advise what items have been approved. Once you have received confirmation of your award you can make arrangements to purchase your equipment. However, funding is typically paid into your bank account on the first day of your course.

In some cases we may provide you with funding to purchase your equipment before the start of your course.

Please note that we will not pay for any equipment which is purchased prior to your DSA application being approved.

What happens to the equipment when I finish my course?

Any equipment you buy with the DSA is your property. When you have finished with your equipment, you may decide to offer it to your college, university or a charity for other students to use, but you do not have to do so.

If we have paid for you to hire equipment, you will have to return this to the provider once the hire period is over.

Will I have to repay my DSA if I leave my course early?

Possibly. We may recover some or all of your DSA if you withdraw from your course. It will depend when you withdraw and whether we have given you money for support that you have not yet bought or received.

What do I do once I have bought all of my equipment?

You should send us receipts for any items of equipment we approve under the large items allowance within 6 weeks of purchase. If this is likely to take longer than 6 weeks, you should contact us at the earliest opportunity.

If your equipment is purchased for less than the amount we have given you, you should repay the difference back to us. You can do this by sending a cheque made payable to “Student Awards Agency Scotland” for the amount you have not spent.

Please note that you may not purchase items at a lower price and use the outstanding balance to upgrade other items. If the price of your equipment changes after your assessment has taken place, please contact your disability advisor.

You can send us receipts for your consumable items, such as ink cartridges, printer paper or photocopying credit throughout the academic session, or all together at the end of the academic session.

Please send us photocopies only of your receipts as you will need to keep the originals for warranty purposes.

We reserve the right to withhold any future award for DSA until we have received your receipts.

What happens if the amount of NMPH I need changes during the year?

You should contact your Disability Advisor as soon as possible to discuss this. Your Disability Advisor should inform us in writing of any possible changes. If we approve the changes, we will write to you to tell you.

We will not cover the cost of NMPH which exceeds the amount your Disability Advisor has recommended. If you provide an invoice for additional hours, we will restrict the amount we pay to the number of hours that your Disability Advisor has approved for you.

Who do I contact if I have any problems with my DSA?

If you have a problem with your needs assessment or the contents of your needs assessment report, you should contact your disability advisor or the individual who carried out your assessment.

If you have issues with your equipment or software, for example, your equipment breaks down or does not work correctly; you should contact the supplier direct.

If you experience problems with your non-medical helper, and you employ them yourself, you must speak to them direct. If an agency or your college/ university provides your helper, you must speak to them.

If you have a problem with your DSA payments or you have any questions about the DSA scheme in general, you should contact SAAS using the contact details below.

Contact us

Telephone: 0300 555 0505
Address: The Student Awards Agency Scotland
DSA Team
Saughton House
Broomhouse
Edinburgh
EH11 3UT

Email: saas_4@gov.scot
Website: www.saas.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Lead Scotland: Information and advice for disabled learners and carers

Room B05
Napier Merchiston Campus
14 Colinton Road
Edinburgh
EH10 5DT

Tel: 0800 999 2568
Email: info@lead.org.uk
Website: www.lead.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission

58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DU

Tel: 0845 604 5510
Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

National Union of Students Scotland

1 Papermill Wynd
McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4QL

Tel: 0131 556 6598
Email: mail@nus-Scotland.org.uk
Website: www.nus.org.uk

Disclaimer: *The information in this guide offers general guidance only and is not legally binding, nor does it constitute any right of eligibility for, or entitlement to, funding. We will assess each student's applicant on his or her individual circumstances in accordance with the information provided with his or her completed application form/s*