

Benefits Advice Note

Disabled Students' Allowances

As a person with narcolepsy, if you are a higher education student living in England, you can apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

Key points

DSAs are funding provided to pay for any additional support a disabled student needs in order to study in higher education on an equal basis with non-disabled people. DSAs are not loans and do not have to be paid back.

DSAs cannot be used to pay for support a person might still need if they were not studying, nor for anything that a non-disabled student would be expected to purchase.

How much you get depends on your individual needs - not your household income. If you're a part-time student your "course intensity" can affect how much you get.

What DSAs can pay for

DSAs can help towards the costs of:

- specialist equipment, eg a computer if you need one because of your disability
- non-medical helpers
- extra travel because of your disability
- other disability-related costs of studying

For instance, you may get a new computer if you don't already have one, or your current one doesn't meet the required specification. More information will be provided to you if you're assessed as needing a new computer. However, you'll need to pay the first £200, which is the minimum cost that any student is likely to incur when buying a computer.

Who provides DSAs?

DSAs are provided by your national student finance body, such as Student Finance England or equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This applies even if you do not have a student loan or grant. The various funding bodies have somewhat different forms and procedures, and you should contact them directly for advice.

How much could you get?

How much you can get depends on your individual needs. There are maximum amounts for specialist equipment, non-medical helpers and general needs. These are around £5,000, £20,000 and £1,700 a year respectively for students on full-time degree courses. However, these are maximum amounts and most students get considerably less.

How do I apply?

If you indicated on your student loans application form that you wished to apply, you should automatically be sent a DSA1 application form. If not, or if you have not applied for a student loan, then you can obtain a DSA1 form from the official government website (see Find out more below). Similar forms are available from the other funding bodies.

The form should be completed and returned with evidence of your disability.

What happens next?

If your funding body approves your application, you will be asked to arrange a Needs Assessment. This is a structured, but fairly informal, discussion with an assessor on how your disability affects study, and what support and adjustments would help you. A Needs Assessment Report is then produced, which may include recommendations and costings for any support that has been agreed. This could include equipment, support from people, help with travel and support from your university or college.

The Report is sent to you, to your university or college and to the funding body. The funding body will then contact you in writing with their final decision on your application.

Find out more

Details of Disabled Students' Allowances can be found at the official government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>

The Student Finance England guide to DSAs can be downloaded here:

http://media.slc.co.uk/sfe/1516/ft/sfe_dsa_guide_1516_d.pdf

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this Note is accurate, it is for general guidance only. Specific advice on your individual circumstances should always be sought. Narcolepsy UK cannot accept any responsibility or liability for actions taken in reliance on the information contained in this Note.