

## Disabled Students' Allowances 2017-18

Disabled Students' Allowances provide extra financial help if you have an impairment, health condition (including mental health conditions) or a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia. They are paid on top of the standard student finance package and don't have to be repaid.

### How Disabled Students' Allowances can help

Disabled Students' Allowances are grants to help meet the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of a disability or specific learning difficulty. They can help people with disabilities to study on an equal basis with other students.

Eligible full-time, part-time and postgraduate students can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances.

The amount you get doesn't depend on your household income. Disabled Students' Allowances are paid on top of the standard student finance package, and don't have to be paid back.

Disabled Students' Allowances can help with the cost of:

- specialist equipment you need for studying , such as computer software
- a non-medical helper, such as a note-taker or reader
- extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability
- other costs, such as tapes or Braille paper

### Eligibility

You can apply if you are doing:

- a full-time course that lasts at least one year (including a distance-learning course)
- a part-time course that lasts at least one year and doesn't take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course (this can include an Open University or other distance-learning course)

To apply for financial help through Disabled Students' Allowances, both you and your course must be eligible. It's worth checking this before you make your application.

To apply, you'll have to show evidence of your disability.

If you have an impairment or a medical condition - this includes long-term illnesses and mental health conditions - you will need to provide medical proof of this, such as a letter from an appropriate medical professional.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you must provide evidence in the form of a 'diagnostic assessment' from a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher. If you've had a diagnostic assessment in the past, it may need to be updated.

**You'll have to meet the cost of any tests to establish your eligibility for Disabled Students' Allowances. If you need a test but cannot afford to pay for it, you may be able to get financial help through the Support Fund.**

### Who doesn't qualify?

If you are eligible for a bursary from the Central Services Agency, you do not qualify for Disabled Students' Allowances from Student Finance NI or your regional Education Authority, but you can apply for equivalent help through the bursary scheme.

You also don't qualify for Disabled Students' Allowances from your regional Education Authority if you're a postgraduate student getting:

- a research council bursary or award
- a social work bursary from the Department of Health that includes equivalent support
- a bursary or award from your college or university that includes equivalent support

You should contact the provider of your bursary or award for advice on any extra support you may be entitled to because of a disability.

### How to apply

There are two different ways of applying for Disabled Students' Allowances. Which one you use will depend on whether or not you are:

- doing a full-time higher education course
- studying part time or doing a postgraduate course

Most universities and colleges have a Disability Advisor. They can help with your application and give you advice about other sources of funding.

If you're doing a full-time higher education course

If you're a full-time higher education student, you should apply for Disabled Students' Allowances by completing application form DSA1.

You'll be sent a copy of the form, and the guidance booklet that goes with it, if you tick the relevant box on your main student finance application – you can also download copies, or ask the Student Finance NI team in the Education Authority office in your region to send them by post.

Ask your local Student Finance NI office if you need copies of the form and guidance booklet in an alternative format – they're available in large print, Braille and audio versions. [Education Authority](#)

When you complete your main student finance application online or on paper, tick the 'Disabled Students' Allowances' box.

In most cases, your local Student Finance NI office will then send you the DSA1 application form for you to complete and return, along with the ' Bridging the Gap' guidance booklet.

Some local Student Finance NI offices may handle applications for Disabled Students' Allowances differently - for example, they may send a confirmation letter for you to sign instead.

- [Completing your student finance application](#)
- [Education Authority](#)
- [Student Finance Northern Ireland](#)

## **Postgraduates and part-time higher education students**

If you're studying part time or doing a postgraduate course, you need to take the DSA1 form to your college or university, ask them to sign it and then send it to the address printed on the form.

You don't need to get your university or college to sign your DSA1 form if you're a part-time higher education student and they have already completed form PTG1 for you. Just send it straight to the address printed on the form once you've filled it in.

## **How much you can get**

Disabled Students' Allowances are aimed at helping people with an impairment, health condition (including mental health conditions) or a specific learning difficulty to study on the same basis as other students. Therefore, how much you get depends on your individual needs – up to a maximum allowance.

### **Working out Disabled Students' Allowances**

When you apply, you will be asked to go for a needs assessment to establish exactly what support you require. This will be carried out by a person with specialist experience at an independent assessment centre, or at a centre within your college or university. The cost of the needs assessment may be met through your Disabled Students' Allowances.

If you're a part-time student, the amount you can get is also affected by the 'intensity' of your course – how much time you spend studying compared to a full-time student.

Household income is not taken into account when working out entitlement to Disabled Students' Allowances. They're paid on top of any help you get through the standard student finance package and you don't have to pay them back.

## **Allowances for full-time and part-time higher education students**

The table below shows the maximum allowances for full-time and part-time higher education students (including Open University students and other distance learners).

Maximum allowances are meant to support the highest levels of need, so most people will get less.

On top of the allowances listed in this table, you can claim for 'reasonable spending' on extra travel costs for the academic year.

### Maximums for full-time and part-time higher education students: 2017 - 2018

Type of allowance	Full-time students	Part-time students
Specialist equipment	£5,266 for entire course	£5,266 for entire course
Non-medical helper	£20,938 a year	£15,703 a year (depends on intensity of course)
General Disabled Students' Allowances	£1,759 a year	£1,319 a year (depends on intensity of course)

### Allowances for full-time and part-time higher education students

Postgraduate students (including Open University students and other distance learners) can apply for a single allowance to cover all costs.

The maximum allowance for 2017 - 2018 is £10,469.

#### How they are paid

The money will either be paid into your account or directly to the supplier of the services - for example your university, college or equipment supplier.

#### Effect on other financial help

Disabled Students' Allowances are not counted as income when working out your entitlement to benefits or tax credits.

#### If your circumstances change

If your disability becomes more severe during your course, you can apply to have another needs assessment. Contact the organisation which handled your application to arrange this.

You'll still be entitled to Disabled Students' Allowances if you transfer to another course. But if you need different equipment and you've already used up your equipment allowance, you will not be able to get any more through Disabled Students' Allowances.

For further information go to: <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/eligibility>

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

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