

## Disabled Students' Allowance

### Information about eligible costs and how students make an application

#### Eligible costs information

There are often extra study-related costs that disabled students incur whilst at University. Home students who register with DAS should apply for [Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\)](#) to cover these costs.

The DSA for students from England may cover the following costs:

1. Specialist non-medical help such as specific learning difficulties (SpLD) study skills tutors, mentors and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. All specialist non-medical help must meet new quality guidelines and be subject to market competition. In practice this means current Oxford provision is now subject to price competition from alternative suppliers.
2. Sighted guides and mobility trainers
3. Standard computer hardware (although subject to the £200 fee)
4. Assistive software, where institutional provision is insufficient to meet student needs
5. Specialist ergonomic equipment
6. Travel costs
7. Personal fridges for medication storage
8. Printing, scanning and audio recording equipment (in limited circumstances)
9. Consumable expenses such as photocopying and printing (in limited circumstances)

There are very similar eligible costs for NHS and Research Council funded students. There is a separate list of eligible costs for students from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and links to the forms and eligibility can be found on the [Oxford student disability webpages](#).

In 2016, Student Finance England made changes to the costs that could be claimed from the DSA. These changes have meant that:

- The University now funds all non-specialist, non-medical help. Non-specialist roles include library support workers, note-takers, examination support workers and practical support assistants. Disability Advisors in DAS assess what support the student will require based on their medical evidence and discussions with the

student. The assistants are employed directly by DAS and the funding for the posts comes from DAS.

- If students are living in college or University-owned accommodation, and they require an ensuite or larger room/s with additional facilities as a result of their disability, these additional costs can no longer be covered by DSA. Colleges have agreed to absorb these extra costs.
- Students will be awarded a printing allowance rarely; colleges have agreed to provide students with a reasonable allowance. This is to be decided at college level on a case by case basis. Typical DSA awards ranged from £50 to £300 per academic year. Scanning equipment and audio recording equipment will only be provided where existing institutional provision does not meet the disability-related need.
- Taxi accounts must be established with Student Finance England (SFE) approved firms for those students who wish to charge frequent taxi travel to their DSA (frequent is defined as more than 30 single journeys per year). The taxi firm must bill SFE directly. The DAS will no longer be able to process these taxi account claims.
- Students must pay a £200 contribution to any provision of computer hardware, and high-specification computers are mostly unfunded. Some colleges have agreed to cover these costs.
- Books and text book costs cannot be charged to DSA.
- Funding for mobility scooters/wheelchairs and other mobility aids will no longer be met through DSA. These costs are expected to be funded through the NHS.

## **Making the DSA application**

The application typically takes 14 weeks so students should be encouraged to apply as soon as they have been offered a place – they should not wait until the place has been secured. Students should be directed to the [information on making the DSA application](#) that can be found on the disability pages of the Oxford student website.

If the student has registered with DAS, then their disability advisor will encourage them to apply for DSA.

## **The Study Needs Assessment**

As part of the DSA application, each student meets with a specialist to assess what study support they will need for their course. This is called a Study Needs Assessment. The needs assessment is not a test, but an opportunity for the student to discuss with a specialist the study-related areas they may need support with, and for the assessor to then make

recommendations to the funding body. The assessment will take up to two hours, carried out at the [Oxford University Assessment Centre](#) in central Oxford (or alternatively at an accredited assessment centre nearer to the student's home), with the cost paid directly from DSA.

- On-going support

Once the assessment has taken place, the role of the Assessment Centre covers on-going support throughout the duration of the student's course, from helping to arrange the support itself, to trouble-shooting problems that arise during study, or re-assessing the student if circumstances change.

- Study Needs Assessment Report

A detailed Study Needs Assessment report is sent to the student (and to DAS if permission is given for this). This document may be helpful in understanding the study needs of the student, and they may wish to share it with teaching staff or their disability coordinator, but this is the student's choice. The Student Support Plan provides a broader overview of the student's requirements (covering all the areas where adjustments may be needed), whilst the SNA report assesses only those needs that are relevant for DSA-eligible funding.

### **Further information**

- [Overview of the DSA application process \(pdf\)](#)
- [Student information about the Study Needs Assessment Process](#)