

# Into HE 2019

A guide to additional support in  
higher education

**SNOWDON**

**TRUST**

## Investing in students with disabilities

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Sean Docherty is one of many Snowdon Trust success stories: He sustained a severe spinal cord injury in a mountain bike accident and spent seven months in Stoke Mandeville.

He went on to study for a Master's Degree in Medical Engineering at Cardiff University where our grants helped to pay for a room for his 24-hour carer.

Sean recently won a scholarship for a research PhD at University College London, developing new medical devices to help people manage life with spinal cord injuries.

“ The Snowdon Trust grants gave me the chance to achieve my goals and I hope my research at UCL will help others with spinal cord injuries. ”

**The Snowdon Trust assists physically and sensory disabled students to access vocational and academic courses by awarding grants.**

**Since launching in 1981, the first International Year of Disabled People, we have supported over 2,300 students to fulfil their potential through education.**

**We give awards where funding cannot be met through other channels.**

**Grants can be for equipment and essential study needs such as:**

- **computer equipment with adaptive software**
- **sign language interpreters**
- **note takers or library assistants**
- **powered wheelchairs and mobility equipment**
- **adapted or additional accommodation costs**

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You can find out more about the work of the Snowdon Trust and the types of costs that our grants can help cover at [www.snowdontrust.org](http://www.snowdontrust.org)

# Into HE 2019

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| ● Preface | 2 |
|-----------|---|

## SECTIONS

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Introduction                       | 3  |
| 2 Fees and funding                   | 5  |
| 3 Flexible study options             | 9  |
| 4 Choosing where to study            | 11 |
| 5 Disability support services        | 15 |
| 6 Visiting universities and colleges | 19 |
| 7 How to apply                       | 21 |
| 8 Being open about your disability   | 25 |
| 9 Disabled Students' Allowances      | 27 |
| 10 Personal care and support         | 31 |
| 11 Other financial help              | 33 |
| 12 After you arrive                  | 35 |

## RESOURCES

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| ● Websites      | 39 |
| ● Publications  | 40 |
| ● Organisations | 41 |

## STUDENT STORIES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| ● Patrick Mahaffey – Birkbeck, University of London  | 8  |
| ● Hannah-Rebecca Joy Guscoth – University of Reading | 14 |
| ● Kurt Shead – University of Warwick                 | 16 |
| ● Duncan Kennedy – University of Birmingham          | 18 |
| ● Tegan Rawlinson – University of York               | 30 |
| ● Joe Weaver – University of Wolverhampton           | 36 |

# Preface

Into HE is a guide for anyone with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability thinking about studying in higher education starting September 2019.

This guide aims to answer common questions such as whether colleges or universities will be accessible, how to choose a course and what support will be available. It also covers the student finance system and has up-to-date information on tuition fees, repayment methods and the support that will be in place for 2019 entry.



In the student stories, six people living with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability write about their own positive experiences, as well as any challenges they have faced, providing a valuable insight into what it's like studying in higher education. As well as taking advantage of the support on offer, the students talk about the importance of their own creativity, perseverance and motivation.

The guide also contains a useful resources section listing further websites, publications and organisations (education, health and disability-related) which you may find helpful.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who assisted with this publication, the students who shared their stories and people who helped find them.

Thanks also to Charlotte D, Shona Heath, Toby Ott, Cheryl Peart, Jake Potts, Carissa Rickeard and Fred Suter for permission to feature their photographs.

We hope this guide will help you make the right decisions about going into higher education. It can be a highly rewarding and enjoyable experience, if challenging at times, and a valuable investment in your future employability.

For free information and advice for anyone living with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability, visit the Disability Rights UK website. The *How we can help* area of our website contains information about education, skills and employment:

 [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

# Introduction

Higher education is a fantastic opportunity to study a subject you enjoy, taking your education to a higher level such as a Bachelor's degree, Foundation degree or higher apprenticeship.

Many people look back on their student days as among the best years of their lives; a time spent making new friends, joining clubs and societies and sharing ideas with people from different backgrounds.

There will be plenty of entertainment – bars, clubs, theatre performances and concerts – as well as the opportunity to use modern IT and laboratory facilities, sports centres, libraries and other resources.

It's important to think about the value of these experiences when weighing up tuition fee costs and student loans.

By going into higher education you're also making a calculated investment in your employability. Graduate recruitment at the country's top 100 employers is expected to increase by 3.6% in 2018.

In 2017, on average a working age graduate earned £10,000 more than a non-graduate.

For disabled people especially, having a higher education qualification means a much lower risk of unemployment. Research from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) shows that disabled people have radically improved job prospects if they continue with their education.

At graduate level, disabled people achieve very similar levels of job success to non-disabled people.

For some careers, such as nursing, law and teaching, you need to study a particular vocational degree. All of these professions can be made accessible to people living with a health condition or disability.



Lots of other employers simply look for degree level qualifications. For them it's not necessarily the in-depth knowledge of your subject that makes you more employable. Instead they value the transferable skills you develop in higher education such as communication, presentation, problem-solving and teamwork. And for disabled people without much work experience; course placements, internships and university links with business and industry can all help the transition into employment.

Studying at university or college is different from being at school. Tutors can give you advice and guidance, but you will have less contact with them than with teachers at school. In higher education it will be up to you to organise your workload and decide how much effort to make. However, this doesn't mean you can't get help with your studies.



Greater independence, including for some students leaving home and learning to live by themselves, can be a key part of the experience. The great advantage of higher education is that it provides a safe and supportive environment for this to happen.

Thinking about what you want to get out of higher education will make it easier to decide if you want to go and where you want to study. Talking to a careers adviser at this stage could be very helpful.

Schools must make sure all Year 8 to Year 13 pupils receive independent careers guidance. This should include information about all the opportunities available – at college, university, apprenticeships and jobs with training. The advice and guidance should be impartial and promote your ‘best interests’.

Schools must give you an outside perspective, for example through providing an external careers adviser, organising college and employer visits or using websites and helplines. Colleges can also provide careers advice and guidance.

Under the Children and Families Act in England, local authorities should support all young people with special educational needs (SEN) or a disability to prepare for adulthood. Discussions should focus on what you want to achieve and the best way to support you.

For young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, local authorities must ensure that the review at Year 9 and every review afterwards, includes a discussion about your future. This should cover your education and employment plans, housing needs, social and health care, including at university.

Local authorities should plan a smooth transition to higher education before your EHC Plan and support stops. When your course place has been confirmed, the local authority should ask your permission to pass a copy of your EHC Plan to the college or university at the earliest opportunity.

Each authority must also produce a Local Offer. This is a document showing all the local services available to children and young people with SEN or a disability. It should include information on the support colleges and universities can provide and how to apply for Disabled Students’ Allowances. You should be able to tell the local authority whether the Local Offer meets your needs.

The National Careers Service provides careers advice through text, webchat, email and a telephone helpline to everyone aged 13 and over. If you’re aged 19 or over (or 18 and receiving an out-of-work benefit) you can also get face-to-face advice. The website includes a section for young people with advice on going to college or university or alternatives such as apprenticeships and traineeships.

Careers advice is also available from Skills Development Scotland and Careers Wales.

# Fees and funding

Although tuition fees have increased since 2012, there is plenty of support to help lessen the cost and you don't need to pay for the course up front.

## ENGLAND

Publicly funded providers in England can charge up to £9,250 per year for full-time undergraduate courses if they are Office for Students registered (OfS) in the fee approved category, have a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and have an access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Other higher education providers can charge between £6,000 and £9,000 depending on their rating and whether or not they have an access agreement.

The increases in tuition fees since 2012 have been controversial and not something that Disability Rights UK or other student organisations necessarily agree with. However it's important not to scare yourself off the idea of going to university with the thought that you "can't afford to go".

There are support measures in place which can lessen the cost. In any case you don't need to pay cash up front. Even more importantly, you only start paying back your loan when your salary reaches a certain level. Many students will never reach the point of having to pay back the full amount.

On the other hand, you need to accept that your student loan is something you'll be gradually paying towards for a long time, probably the majority of your working life.

### Loans for tuition fees

You can apply for a loan to cover tuition fees. The loan is paid directly to the provider on your behalf. In most cases this loan will cover the total costs of your fees. This means that you don't have to find the money before you start the course or while you are studying.



### For more information

As well as our own information in this section, we recommend the Student Loan Company (SLC) guides for 2019 entry. SLC materials are hosted at:

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

### Loans for living costs

You can also apply for a loan for help with living costs if you're a full-time student. The amount you can borrow varies according to your household income, where you live or study, and your age.

New students, aged under 60 at the start of their course, and not living with their parents can get a maximum loan of £11,672 if studying in London and £8,944 if studying outside London. For students living at home with their parents the maximum loan available is £7,529.

### Loans for living costs aged 60 or over

If you are aged 60 or over at the start of your course you can get a maximum loan of £3,783.

### Loans for living costs if you're entitled to benefits

You can get more support with living costs if you qualify for certain benefits such as Personal Independence Payment. The loan has a maintenance element and a special support element. The special support element will be ignored as income for means-tested benefits. New students not living with their parents can get a maximum loan of £12,729 if studying in London and £10,194 if studying outside London. For students living at home with their parents the maximum loan available is £8,882.



### Repayments

You start repaying your loan in the April following graduation and/or when you're earning over £25,000 per year. Above this level you pay 9% of your income. For example, if your salary is £30,000, you will pay 9% of £5,000 (£37.50 per month) taken through the income tax system.

Some other things to bear in mind:

- You'll repay the same each month whether you choose a course that costs £6,000 or £9,000.
- If you never earn more than £25,000 you'll never have to repay anything.
- If you start repaying but lose your job or take a pay cut, your repayments will go down.
- After 30 years any remaining debt will be wiped clear.

### Access agreements – financial support from providers

Publicly funded universities and colleges which are charging more than £6,000 have to put in place measures to recruit students from poorer backgrounds – and also support them when they are studying. These measures have been agreed with an independent body called the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Each university offers its own scheme, but they generally include means-tested bursaries and scholarships as well as spending money on increasing access and outreach work.

Outreach work includes summer schools, mentoring programmes, after-school tuition, links with schools and colleges in disadvantaged areas and activities to improve retention and success. Check if there are any activities in your area.

### WALES

Tuition fee loans are available to cover the cost of fees which are set at a maximum of £9,000 for all subjects.

All students receive a £1,000 annual non-means tested maintenance grant. Students are also eligible for an additional means-tested maintenance grant. The grant amount is based on household income.

Students who do not receive the full grant can apply for a maintenance loan for the difference between their grant award and the maximum level of maintenance support (grant plus loan).

These are as follows:

- £9,225 for students living away from home and outside London
- £11,530 for students living away from home and in London
- £7,840 for students living at home.

### SCOTLAND

The standard tuition fee in Scotland is £1,820 (2018/19). However, if you meet the residency conditions the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) will pay these fees. Tuition fee charges for 2019/20 were still to be confirmed at time of writing. Scottish universities can charge up to £9,250 per year to students from elsewhere in the UK.

All eligible students can apply for a loan towards their fees and living costs. There are also various grants, bursaries and extra help to meet your costs as a student. For more information, contact Lead Scotland.

### NORTHERN IRELAND

If you live in Northern Ireland the maximum tuition fee is £4,275. This fee doesn't need to be paid up front. Universities in Northern Ireland can charge up to £9,250 per year to students from other parts of the UK. Students should check the UCAS website or contact the university or college directly.



All eligible students can apply for a loan towards their fees and students from lower-income households may be eligible for maintenance grants. Living cost loans are also available.

#### Awarding authorities

##### If you currently live in England:

Contact Student Finance England. You should aim to complete your student finance application before June 2016 to be sure you have all your money when you start your course.

W [www.slc.co.uk/students/student-finance-england](http://www.slc.co.uk/students/student-finance-england)

##### If you currently live in Wales:

Contact Student Finance Wales.

W [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

##### If you currently live in Scotland:

Contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

W [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

##### If you currently live in Northern Ireland:

Contact your regional Education Authority (EA) or apply online through Student Finance Northern Ireland.

W [www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)

## Patrick Mahaffey

BA (Hons) Global Politics and International Relations. Birkbeck, University of London

**After a major life-threatening event in my life several years ago, I recently completed a really successful first year at Birkbeck. My degree involves part-time study by evening classes over four years.**



In 2012, interested in the possibility of studying at university, I started searching online and made contact with the National Careers Service. I spoke with them regarding the different study options available. Having sustained a severe brain injury in 2007 and having spent two and half years, firstly in hospital followed then by a rehabilitation centre, I still have cognitive and physical difficulties. I was aware that I would I require support to complete a degree.

My next step was to attend a university fair. I spoke with representatives of several universities based in London. I identified that Birkbeck offered both a course that I was interested in, and a format of study that worked for me.

I made an application to Student Finance England to organise a study needs assessment at a university in London. After a detailed meeting with an assessor, I received a report outlining the range of equipment and

study support I would receive. This was paid for out of Disabled Students' Allowances.

My computer, software and other equipment was installed by an instructor who came to my home to show me how to use it effectively. I attended a meeting with a study skills tutor, whom I met with weekly, either on campus or via Skype from home. During these sessions we talked over suitable techniques to help negotiate my study difficulties.

I find the lengthy readings relevant to the course particularly hard. This was one of the reasons for me deciding to study part-time.

I have found the density of readings slightly more manageable than those required in full-time study. Additionally, I have a note taker to help capture the information that I find difficult to keep up with during the 50-minute sessions. I have been able to request extra time for exams if required.

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*I found the application process much less complex than I had expected, and overall dealing with disability support workers has been a pleasure.*

Looking back at my first year of study at university, I am very happy to have had the opportunity to absorb all that I have learnt. Interacting with my classmates throughout the year has been very enjoyable. Generally, I found the application process much less complex than I had expected, and overall dealing with disability support workers has been a pleasure.

It's been a year of achievement, pleasure and growth for me and a springboard for the many exciting opportunities and challenges that I am ready to meet in the future.

# Flexible study options

If you don't want to study a three-year full-time course, there are a range of flexible options. Many courses, including foundation degrees and higher or degree apprenticeships, can be taken part-time. Modular courses allow you to work at your own pace, stopping for a while if necessary or switching to part-time. Distance learning is another option.

## PART-TIME STUDY

There are lots of positive reasons to consider part-time study. It may enable you to balance other commitments such as continuing your career or supporting your family. Studying fewer hours per week might make the course easier to access.

Many students simply prefer the flexibility that part-time study allows. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), part-time students made up 27% of all undergraduates in the 2016/17 academic year.

Part-time courses usually have less of an impact than full-time courses on any benefits you receive such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). For more information on welfare benefits see Section 11.

## Loans for tuition fees

Publicly funded universities and colleges can charge £4,500 per year for part-time HE courses. Some charge up to £6,935 where they are Office for Students registered (OfS) in the fee approved category, have achieved a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has approved an access plan. Some universities and colleges offer money back through bursaries.

Part-time students don't need to pay up front. If it's your first higher education course and you're studying at least 25% of the equivalent full-time programme, you can apply for tuition fee loans on the same basis as full-time students.



## Loans for living costs

Living cost loans are available for part-time undergraduate students, just as they are for full-time students. The amount you can get depends on the intensity of your studies, up to the following maximums:

- Living away from home and studying in London £11,672
- Living away from home and studying outside London £8,944
- Living in your parents' home £7,529

You start repaying your loan in the April following graduation and/or when you're earning over £25,000 per year.

In the case of students studying with the Open University (OU), they may also be able to get a living cost loan if they're studying by distance learning because of a disability.

Part-time students can also apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) towards extra disability-related study costs. See Section 9.

### DISTANCE LEARNING

Open and distance learning courses allow a more flexible approach to studying. You study at your own pace. Most of the work is done from home, though you might occasionally go to an open learning centre or a residential seminar. Courses usually involve a range of media including the internet and TV.

The Open University (OU) is the largest open learning provider in the UK. The OU is the largest provider of higher education for disabled people. It had 23,630 disabled students in 2015/16 and offers more than 250 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and professional qualifications. For a typical OU student, studying half the full-time equivalent, the fees were £2,928 per year in 2018/19.

A number of other colleges and universities also offer distance learning options.

### FOUNDATION DEGREES

Foundation degrees are employment-focused higher education qualifications. They aim to equip students with the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in the workplace.

Foundation degrees are designed and developed in partnership with employers and therefore focus on a particular job role or profession and enable you to have professional and technical skills to further your career. You can study full-time, part-time, by distance learning or via the internet. They are a qualification in their own right, although you can progress to an honours degree or other professional qualification afterwards.

### DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Degree apprenticeships combine working with studying. Apprentices are employed throughout the programme, spend part of their time at university and the rest with their employer. This can be on a day-to-day basis or in blocks of time, depending on the programme and requirements of the employer.



# Choosing where to study

There are over 160 higher education institutions in the UK and a growing number of further education colleges which run higher education courses. These come in all shapes and sizes with many thousands of course combinations.

The best way to narrow down the field is to start by choosing a subject and type of course. Research into why some students leave university early has found that choosing the wrong course was an important factor.

It's essential to research and choose carefully. There are a number of good books and websites with information on choosing a course. You can find a selection of these in the Resources section at the back of this publication. You can search for courses on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website. UCAS also produces an annual directory with information on universities and colleges and the courses they offer.

You may want to discuss your options with a careers adviser. If you're still at school or college, you could also talk to your teachers or tutors. Current and past students, family and friends can all be useful sources of advice.

The following are things all students need to think about and some are specific to people living with a health condition or disability.

## ENJOYING YOUR STUDY

Having a subject you enjoy is an important part of a successful experience of Higher Education. Vocational subjects and business courses are currently popular. Many subjects will be new to you and the combinations are worth investigating. For example, did you know you could take a course in Psychology with Sports Studies, or Astrophysics with Music Technology? If you enjoy performing arts such as music, dance or drama, studying at a conservatoire could be the answer for you.

Concentrate first on what you want to study. Most subjects can be made accessible with the appropriate support.

Don't be put off by people assuming you can't do something because of your impairment, disability or health condition.

- Visually impaired students take graphic design courses
- Deaf people study music
- People with dyslexia train to be teachers

## HOW YOU WILL STUDY

Some subjects involve more practical work, such as Veterinary Science. Others are more theoretical, for example, Philosophy. One French course may focus on literature and history and another on language and spoken French. The course you choose will determine whether you study more on your own or have more lectures and workshops to attend.

You might be assessed continuously throughout the course, have final examinations at the end of each module or year, submit a dissertation or have an oral examination. There may be different types of assessments, for example examinations, coursework, presentations or a combination of all three.





Some courses include work placements ranging from two weeks' experience to a full year in industry. If you have significant support needs, you may need to plan how these will be met during placements. It might be helpful to discuss this with the programme leader and the provider's disability adviser.

Higher and degree apprenticeships provide an opportunity to gain a higher education qualification while working and training. Additional support in the workplace can be provided through the Access to Work scheme.

### COST

Course costs and the available financial support are likely to influence your final decision. It's worth remembering that you'll repay the same each month regardless of whether tuition fees are £6,000 or £9,250. Some universities have measures to support students from poorer backgrounds or give special financial incentives to students with higher A level grades.

### FEE WAIVERS OR BURSARIES

A fee waiver is a reduction each year on your tuition fees. This means you need to borrow less student tuition loan. A bursary is some form of cash or gift in kind such as help with your accommodation.

If there is a choice and the amounts are the same, it may be best to choose a bursary. Bursaries provide cash to pay for daily bills which can reduce the immediate need for any other commercial bank loans or credit.

Fee waivers are a less certain benefit because you may never even get close to needing to pay back the full amount of your loan. On the other hand, if the bursary is for living costs it will be treated as income for any means-tested benefits you receive.

### ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

When deciding where to study, there are a number of academic factors to think about. For example, what are the best universities and colleges for your subject? Are you likely to achieve the UCAS points or qualifications they usually ask for? Is your choice of provider likely to influence future employers?

You can check the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award for universities and colleges that you're interested in studying at. The TEF provides information on teaching quality, the learning environment and student outcomes and can help you make an informed choice about where to study. Providers which participate can achieve a gold, silver, bronze or provisional rating. However, bear in mind that:

- TEF ratings are for the provider as a whole, not individual courses. Not all courses offered by Gold-rated universities will be the best, while those with a lower rating may offer outstanding courses or support in a particular area.
- The framework is voluntary. There may be good reasons why some high-quality providers choose not to take part.

### For more information

Unistats is the official website for comparing universities and colleges. The data shows students' entry qualifications, course progression, degree results, and the types of career and further study that students go on to. You can also use it to look up National Student Satisfaction results.

<https://unistats.direct.gov.uk>

## LOCATION

You may want or need to be near your family and travel to university or college daily.

Living at home will usually work out cheaper, although your living costs loan amount will be less. If you're a mature student you may have children, work and a mortgage to think about.

On the other hand, you might want to move to another part of the country. Some providers have buildings on a campus which means that all the facilities are on-site – libraries, lecture theatres, cafes, supermarkets and bookshops. Some students prefer to study in a city where the provider's buildings are often spread out. If you have mobility difficulties a campus university may be more accessible.

## ACCOMMODATION

Find out the size and cost of the rooms.

If you intend to live in university-provided accommodation, ask if there are any limits on how long you can stay. You may want to get a guarantee of accessible accommodation for your entire course. Find out what is available; halls of residence, flats or rented housing.

Check if there are features you might need, such as:

- accessible rooms
- lifts, making sure there are no 'out of hours' restrictions
- adapted kitchens and laundry facilities
- appropriate safety and evacuation procedures
- flashing light fire alarms if you have a hearing impairment
- additional rooms available if you have a personal assistant.

You may also wish to find out if all the accessible rooms are put in one block or are spread out across the halls of residence.

## ACCESS TO THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

Find out whether buildings and facilities are accessible to you. Buildings you're likely to use include the students' union, bars, canteens, libraries, computer rooms, sports facilities, lecture theatres, teaching rooms and any departmental rooms. If you have a hearing impairment, check if lecture theatres and teaching rooms have induction loops. You may also need to find out if there is parking for disabled people, good lighting and helpful signs around the university or college.

Don't be discouraged if some things aren't right. Talk to the disability adviser about your needs and discuss what adaptations can be made before you start.

## DISABILITY SUPPORT

Under the Equality Act, all universities and colleges have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their services, so disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. All providers also have a student support or disability office, so you should be able to discuss how your individual needs will be met. Section 5 has more information on this.

You might want to go further and research individual university and college websites, Facebook profiles and other materials to gain a better understanding of their support for disabled people. For example, you could look at its Student Charter and whether it covers equality and diversity, health and welfare support and complaints procedures. You could also read the provider's access agreement published on the OFFA website.

The very best way to find out what a university or college is like is to visit it before you apply. It's an opportunity to see the facilities, explore the area and meet the course tutors. This is discussed in Section 6.

## Hannah-Rebecca Joy Guscoth

BA (Hons) History of Art and Architecture.  
University of Reading

**I chose my course because it was something different and allowed me to learn a new subject. I live with Hereditary Multiple Exostoses, which is a medical condition affecting bone development.**



I had a challenging time at university because I happened to fall quite ill whilst at university. The disability department were brilliant. They were really helpful, gave me practical advice, lots of time and kept my lecturers informed about my health and effects on my study.

I used a laptop, Dictaphone, speech software, ergonomic equipment and I had note takers and library support. All of this help made it possible for me to study and really engage with my degree. I had an amanuensis in my exams, and a special room to conduct my exams. It took a lot of pressure off and meant I could take fewer painkillers during exams and think clearly when it counted. My disability support was funded by Disabled Students' Allowances, and it changed my degree!

In my second year my art history department had a compulsory study trip that would have been incredibly difficult for me to attend.

With the help of the disability department, we were able to get them to rewrite the module. This allowed me to continue the work and get the grades, but not struggle with the challenges of travel abroad. It was very rewarding because it felt like the department cared.

One of the worst experiences I had was having a member of staff ask me in my third year why I was using crutches. They should have worked it out by now! Instead of challenging them, I left it alone. I learnt not to assume everyone would know what support I needed, because three years into uni one staff member didn't even know I was disabled!

The most useful advice I was given came from my disability advisor – to accept help. I spent a lot of time saying that I wouldn't have this or that because I wanted to be like everyone else. However, she helped me realise that if I didn't take support, I wouldn't be like everyone else – I'd be worse off. She taught me that having different needs isn't a negative, and missing support only hurts me.

“

*The most useful advice came from my disability advisor – to accept help. She helped me realise that if I didn't take support, I wouldn't be like everyone else – I'd be worse off ...*

This is advice I'd pass onto everyone else. Extenuating circumstances, extra support, extra time or whatever; it's really important to fight for it and take it if you're entitled. Not doing so just means you're not giving yourself the credit you deserve, or the chance to do your best.

# Disability support services

Universities and colleges provide a wide range of services for students that are separate from the teaching arrangements. These include money advice, accommodation, counselling, health and wellbeing centres, careers and employment advice and disabled student services.

In most larger providers, disability support services are on campus, are open all day and can be walk-in or by appointment. In smaller colleges disability support may be covered by staff in administrative departments, for example the Registry.

Disabled student services staff are responsible for delivering the university's commitment to equality. Universities and colleges are increasingly being asked to develop inclusive teaching and learning strategies to ensure course design, delivery and assessment is accessible to students living with a health condition or disability. Recent changes to Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) mean that universities and colleges are focusing more on their duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act.

Every year more people living with a health condition or disability consider higher education as an option and the processes to make sure they have an excellent learning experience are well understood and recognised by universities and colleges.

Many students go in and out of student services all the time so there's no need to worry about any stigma attached to using disability services. You can get help any time during your course, including if you move on to postgraduate studies.

## HELP AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Disability services can help and advise you on applying for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) (see Section 9) and will arrange for any recommendations to be carried out.

Not all adjustments require financial support through DSAs. For example, extra time to finish your assignment and tutors providing handouts in advance and in alternative formats can be arranged through the disability adviser.

Disability advisers are trained professionals and they have lots of experience working with students with all kinds of impairments. They may have information about types of support and ways of studying that you might not have thought of before.

Examples include:

- **Technology** – specialist software such as mind mapping, speech to text, screen readers, Brain in Hand (which gives students access to support using their phone), voice recognition and 'lecture capture' technology whereby you can listen to or view a lecture on the web or mobile device;
- **Equipment** – an ergonomic chair, a fridge in your room to store medication and adjustments to doors;
- **Personal support** – a person to help you make notes or help in the library, someone to assist in the laboratory, specially trained staff to support you if you have a sensory impairment, for example a sign language interpreter or a mentor to support you adjusting to university life;
- **Study arrangements** – extra support for planning assignments, reading lists in advance, accessible study materials, extra time in exams or assessments; support with field work or work experience arrangements.

## Kurt Shead

BA (Hons) English Literature, University of Warwick

I'm in my second year at university. I have cerebral palsy and use a wheelchair. After my A levels I took some time out due to health reasons and decided not to go to higher education straight away as I was worried about my care and support.



I need support to get up in the morning, get dressed and leave the house, cook and clean, and to go out socially. This is essential in order to both attend university and enjoy it!

The Disability Officer at Warwick told me about CSV (Community Service Volunteers, now Volunteering Matters) Student Choices. This is a way of getting personalised care and support at university through volunteers. CSV's full-time volunteers would live in university accommodation close to my own, and I would be able to co-ordinate their roles, hours of volunteering, and how they support me.

CSV volunteers do this for a variety of reasons, including because they want to take a year out of education themselves, develop their own life experiences, gain new skills, help someone else and think about what they want to gain from university in the future.

I've now got a team of three volunteers who support my personal care needs, including when I'm out and about socially. The number of volunteers allows for flexibility and ensures that, if anyone is ill or taking a break, I maintain consistent support from people I've got to know and feel comfortable with.

The main benefits of being supported by volunteers are that they're close to my age. When they support me socially, it's more like going out with a larger group of friends. They're also very flexible: nothing at university is planned and it's important to be able to be spontaneous, and I can do that with the volunteers – they give me the freedom to do things I want to do.

Without this support, going to University would not have been possible. I can also now see how I CAN live independently, I CAN do more than I thought – it is brilliant, I am so glad that I found out about it!

“

*Meeting my care and support needs at university was one of my biggest fears, but the volunteers have turned it into one of my biggest pleasures.*

### More about Volunteering Matters

Volunteering Matters charge an annual retainer in return for up to 35 hours per week personal support. This fee can be paid from your personal budget if you receive one.

To find out more about how you can get personalised care and support at university through Volunteering Matters Student Choices:

**T** 020 3780 5870

**W** <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk>

### PLANNING AHEAD

If you contact disability services at the universities or colleges you're interested in, they will send you information about how they organise things. It should be easy to find contact information on individual university websites. You can email questions to the disability adviser whilst you're finalising your choices. On Open Days you can usually arrange to meet with a disability adviser if you contact them in advance.

### WILL DISABILITY SERVICES KNOW ABOUT ME BEFORE I ARRIVE?

Disability services will be told if you've been open about your health condition, learning difficulty or disability in the UCAS application. Some universities contact you before you arrive, but at that stage they won't know anything more about you. They will invite you to discuss any support you might need and may ask you to bring in medical evidence. If you've not been contacted, you should think about making an appointment to see the Disability Adviser.

If you choose not to be open, they won't know you've got a disability. This is discussed in Section 8.

On the Disabled Students' Allowances application form, there's a section which asks about your 'Consent to share DSAs arrangements'. If you tick the box, disability services will be sent a copy of the letter confirming your eligibility for DSAs. They can then help with the DSA process or contact you to make sure you're making progress with your application. If you agree, they will also be sent a copy of your DSA assessment report. This will help them to arrange everything as early as possible, for example booking a support worker to be in place at the beginning of your course.



Some universities and colleges combine their student services for disabled students with the access centre where DSA assessments are carried out. You can find more information about the process in Section 9.

### STUDY SUPPORT

Most HEPs will have a service to support students with the writing and completion of their assignments and assessments. They will usually be based in the library or within the student services department and might be called the writing support team or study support services.

If you're uncertain about approaching disability services and getting support with your work, the study support service can be a useful starting point. Generally, support is provided in the format of individual tutorials, but these services also usually offer seminars and workshops on how best to approach studying in higher education. They can also refer you on to more specialist support if required.

## Duncan Kennedy

BSc (Hons) Mathematics – University of Birmingham

**I chose Birmingham because of how understanding their Asperger's support staff seemed to be at various Open Days.**



I also wanted to be close to home so I could go back for an evening or weekend to help ease the transition from school to uni. For my first few weeks I went home every weekend, not because of major issues but because I was just generally tired with all the excitement and settling into a new routine.

In the August before I started, the university let me and Mum stay overnight in the accommodation block. This helped familiarise me with the flat, as well as cooking my own food. I was also allowed to move in the day before arrivals weekend. This was particularly useful because I could unpack my things, put them where I wanted and settle in, without being in a busy crowd of people doing the same. This in turn made it easier for me to socialise with my new flatmates.

In Freshers' week there was a societies' fair. I looked at the list on the Guild website beforehand and chose which ones to join. This was so I knew where to go in the noisy, busy marquee where the fair took place. I joined the ballroom dancing society and video games society. I enjoy them very much and have made a few friends through them.

In preparation for Freshers' week, Mum and Dad told me how it's an ideal time to make new friends, and the kind of questions to ask people – like “Which course are you doing?” or “Where are you from?” I played drinking games and went clubbing for the first time in my life. I wasn't sure what I'd make of it, but I went along and enjoyed it, even though I was always the first to leave.

Over the year, I became friends with my flatmates. We often go to the cinema or student plays together. When I told them I had Asperger's, the response was positive and they accepted me as I am.

I get funding through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for a special pen and paper called a livescribe that can record lectures, a laptop to play back the recordings, notetaker support in lectures, a student mentor and weekly meetings with a mentor who has specialist Asperger's training.

“

*All of this has been instrumental to my success so far. Overall, my first year as a student has been a resounding success.*

DSAs also cover the difference in cost between ensuite and non-ensuite accommodation, because I find things easier in my own private space. All of this has been instrumental to my success so far.

The student mentor played a key role in helping me settle in at the start of term. The equipment and notetakers have been very useful with revision, especially playing back excerpts from lectures about the topics I find hard. In exams I was given 25% extra time and a separate room, with other students who have similar arrangements.

# Visiting universities and colleges

Visiting a university or college is the best way to find out what it's really like and help you decide where to go.

Most universities and colleges have Open Days when you can look around their facilities including the library, student union and halls of residence, meet course tutors, speak to lecturers and ask questions. You can find dates on websites and Facebook pages or visit [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) which is an online directory of college and university open days across the UK.

Another option is to go to higher education exhibitions where you can meet staff from several providers all at once. These are arranged around the country by UCAS. The UCAS website has details of these events which are free to attend and take place from March to July in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and August to October in Scotland.

Some providers offer taster courses, so you can experience academic and social life on campus, before applying for a place. These are usually one-day courses or held over a weekend. You'll get the chance to meet staff and get hands-on experience of facilities, attend lectures, discussions and tutorial sessions. Taster courses can provide an important insight into how the provider works, the campus layout and potential adjustments which could be put in place. You can search for taster courses on the UCAS website.

If you have very specific needs, you should visit all the providers you're interested in. It's better not to waste one of your UCAS choices by finding out a provider is unsuitable after you've applied. Many universities and colleges welcome early, informal visits as they provide staff with an opportunity to discuss possible support arrangements with you.

Your visit is not a selection day for the university or college to decide whether it wants to offer you a place. It's a chance for you to get as much information as possible, to help you decide whether you want to apply.

## MAKING CONTACT

Contact the admissions officer or the head of department for your course. They'll be used to arranging visits and will usually welcome enquiries from students living with a health condition or disability. The disability adviser can also help with disability-related questions. They may be able to arrange for you to speak to students on the course you're interested in as well as other disabled students at the provider. You may also be able to meet accommodation staff and try out the facilities in halls.

## DISCUSSING ISSUES

Tutors can discuss course options, how many assignments, lectures and seminars you'll have and the structure of the course with you. You can talk to them about how your individual needs can be met and what kinds of adjustments would be made so that you can access the course. If you need flexible exam arrangements, talk about these as well. To make assessments more accessible, many universities and colleges are considering different formats such as logs, journals, audio and audio recordings and presentations instead of essays, and giving extra time to complete a task.

The disability adviser should be able to tell you about the provider's services for disabled students, including accommodation and support arrangements. If the provider agrees to adapt buildings or things on your course, ask them to put this in writing.

Once your place is confirmed, check that work is underway and, if necessary, visit again to make sure the changes meet your needs.

### Talk to students at the college

If possible, ask the disability office or Students Union to help arrange for you to talk to current disabled students. They can tell you first-hand what they think about the support arrangements, the level of work expected and any difficulties they've had.

### ASSISTANCE DURING YOUR VISIT

Let the provider know in advance if you need assistance on the day of your visit. The disability adviser should be able to arrange any support you need. This could include; a parking space, a map of wheelchair accessible routes, information in large print, a sign language interpreter or other communication aid, or accommodation for you and your personal assistant.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A VISIT

#### Physical accessibility

- What's public transport like in the area?
- Are there clear signs around the town and the campus?
- What's the lighting like?
- Are all campus facilities fully accessible?
- How far apart are the buildings?
- Are there car parking spaces?
- How do I get a parking permit?
- Is there a campus minibus?
- Are all the buildings fully accessible?  
For example, are there wheelchair ramps, accessible lifts, toilets and stair lifts?
- Is there a choice of accessible accommodation?
- Can I live on campus for longer than one year of my course?

#### Buildings you might use include:

- halls of residence, flats or rented accommodation
- kitchen and laundry facilities
- cafes and restaurants
- the students' union and bars
- the library
- sports facilities
- lecture theatres
- various departmental rooms

#### Studying and exams

- How will my individual study and exam needs be met?
- What alternative methods of assessment will be available?
- How will my needs be communicated to lecturers or other staff?
- Will the support that I need be put in place quickly?
- With some impairments, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, you may need to ask if there is a room where you can rest. How has the university supported other students with a similar impairment?

#### Other support facilities

- Are there any schemes whereby you can enrol early to get used to the campus and make sure all your support is in place?
- Is there a university health service or do students register with local GPs?
- How accessible are other student services such as counselling?
- Can someone help apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)?
- What other support is available?

You may find it helpful to take a copy of this checklist of disability-related questions with you when you visit.

# How to apply

Most applications for full-time undergraduate courses go through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

UCAS applications are made online using the UCAS Apply system. If you're currently studying, you can apply to UCAS through your school or college. Your school or college will give you a 'buzzword' so you can link your application to them. A member of staff can then add a reference, check your application and send it to UCAS on your behalf. You can also make an application as an individual, getting your own reference and cutting and pasting this into your application. Either way, once you've registered, the Apply system is easy to use and you can access it wherever there is an internet connection.

If you can't fill in the application yourself, ask someone to help type your answers. You can practice as much as you like, as changes can be made at any stage before you send your completed application. Your application will be automatically saved online and you can follow its progress using UCAS Track. After that you'll be in control of communicating with your chosen universities. If you want a family member or support worker to give or receive information on your behalf, you can give them 'nominated access'.

You can choose to share some of your UCAS application details with your Student Finance company. See Section 2 for information on fees and funding.

The UCAS application allows you to choose up to five courses at different or the same provider(s). There is no preference order. If you're applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry you have four choices. In addition, you can make one further choice for a different degree subject.



UCAS charges £18 if you apply for one course at one provider. For two or more choices the cost is £24. It's advisable to use all your choices in case you're not accepted by your first choice.

The general deadline for applying through UCAS is 6pm 15 January although late applications will be considered if there are still vacancies on the course. If you're applying for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science or Dentistry, or to Oxford or Cambridge, the next deadline is 6pm 15 October 2019.

Your school or college is likely to give you an earlier deadline as this allows them to add things, such as references, check personal statements and choices.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement is your chance to tell colleges and universities why they should want you as a student. Admissions officers will want to know why you're interested in the courses you've applied for, why you're suitable for studying it and what you hope to do after your studies. You should think carefully about the information you give and the best way to present it. Remember, you must be truthful and accurate in what you write.

You can write up to 4,000 characters of text or 47 lines. A good personal statement is particularly important if you don't meet the usual academic requirements.

Looking at course descriptions and identifying the qualities, skills and experience it requires can help you decide what to write about. This will give you an idea about the skills and qualities the university values most. You should think about all the experiences you've been involved in that have helped shape you into the person you are. This includes outside interests, such as hobbies, work experience, volunteering, clubs and societies or positions of responsibility. Admissions officers are looking for evidence of character and achievement and you may be able to give examples of determination and initiative related to your health condition or disability. You could also include any involvement in widening participation schemes such as summer schools or any qualifications or activities you have undertaken in personal development.

## REFEREE STATEMENT

This is a supporting statement from a tutor or a teacher, providing a view on your academic and personal suitability for a course. If you don't have a teacher or tutor who can provide a reference, ask another responsible person who knows you and your abilities, for example, a previous employer, volunteering supervisor or trainer. References are not accepted from family members or friends.

If you're currently studying for a qualification it's important that your referee adds your predicted grades as some colleges and universities will not consider your application without them.

You might want to discuss with your referee whether or not you're happy for them to mention your impairment.

The advantages of being open about your disability are discussed in Section 8.

## MATURE STUDENTS

'Mature student' usually means a student who is over 21 when they start their course. Colleges and universities recognise that students who enter higher education later in life are usually highly motivated, bring valuable experience and contribute a lot to debates and seminars.

Whatever your age, if you do not have the usual formal qualifications, providers may look at other experience or qualifications gained through work or an Access to Higher Education Diploma. Check with the college or university you are interested in to see if your experience and qualifications are acceptable.

### For more information

UCAS produces a *Mature Students' Guide* with information and advice to those returning to study some time after leaving school. The Student Room website includes video case studies of mature students and areas to share experiences.

 [www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

## HOW DO PROVIDERS SELECT STUDENTS?

Most students are selected and offered a place on the strength of their written applications. Colleges and universities will look at qualifications you already have, including any AS results. The offer of a place might also be conditional on future expected grades. Some offers are based on the UCAS tariff.

Points may be achieved from different qualifications such as A levels/Scottish Highers, vocational A levels, BTEC National qualifications, 14-19 Diplomas, Advanced Apprenticeships and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Offers may be worded to ensure that applicants fulfil the minimum entry requirements for example, '180 UCAS tariff points from at least 2 A levels'.

In recent years many universities have moved towards offers based on grades rather than points. Conditional offers will be confirmed when your exam results are known. UCAS will send you each provider's offer as soon as it's made. You'll also get a summary of all the responses early in May. If you get more than one offer you have to make a 'firm acceptance' for your first choice. You can keep a second offer as an 'insurance' offer.

## INTERVIEWS

Whether you're invited to an interview varies according to courses and providers. Often you're invited to an interview if you're applying for a competitive, health or education related course or to a selective university such as Oxford or Cambridge.

If you're invited for an interview, here are some points to think about:

- Read the prospectus so you can talk about the course and the provider
- Research the latest in your subject area
- Read through a copy of your application form – interviewers may ask you questions about the information you provided
- Prepare some questions to ask the tutors
- Practice – have mock interviews with a tutor or careers adviser
- Be on time
- Look presentable
- Be polite, honest and positive

To get to the interview and perform at your best you may want to arrange for help from your parents or other people such as a personal assistant or an interpreter.

Talking about your impairment will enable tutors to ask questions about how best to make the course accessible and inclusive. Staff may need to adapt their teaching materials or methods to suit you such as using pastel rather than white backgrounds for PowerPoint presentations and providing handouts and presentations in advance.

Be prepared to speak about potential problems and solutions. If you've managed well at school, you have good reason to say you will do well in higher education. Say what support you expect from the provider to help you succeed.

Discussions about your health condition, learning difficulty or disability are not part of the admissions process. Your application should only be judged on your academic ability and experience. Ideally, you'll have already discussed this with the disability adviser.

## FITNESS REGULATIONS

On some courses such as medicine, nursing and teaching, you may have to meet 'fitness to practise' regulations set by professional bodies. These relate to health and safety requirements and the demands of that particular career. The process involves a health questionnaire and occasionally an occupational health assessment. However, no-one should assume that a disabled person can't become a teacher or health professional.

Under the Equality Act, colleges and universities have to consider all possible reasonable adjustments as part of the 'fitness' assessment. They also have to support you throughout the course, including during any work placements in schools, health centres or hospitals.

### ADMISSIONS TESTS

Some providers have admissions tests for their most popular subjects. These tests are designed to measure your ability to study at higher education level. You can find details of most admissions tests at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). You can also contact the college or university direct by phone or email. The results will be considered alongside your UCAS points and performance at any interview. If you're asked to sit an admissions test you may want to discuss your access needs with the provider's disability adviser.

### IF YOUR APPLICATION IS UNSUCCESSFUL

Universities and colleges don't usually give detailed feedback. However, they certainly can't reject you because of your health condition or disability unless they can show that they can't meet your specific needs. They can only make this decision after they have considered all possible reasonable adjustments.

If you think you may have been rejected because of your impairment, contact the provider and ask for the reasons for their decision. If you believe you've been discriminated against you have the right to make a complaint. If the provider is unable to meet your needs, UCAS will allow you to substitute this choice for another one. If you receive rejections, try to remain positive. Other places and options are still open to you.

### IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OFFERS

If you don't take any of your offers, or if all your applications are rejected, you'll be eligible for Extra. This scheme allows you to apply for other courses with vacancies. You can apply for one course at a time through Extra on the UCAS website at no extra charge. UCAS extra runs between 25 February and 30 June. You can't change your UCAS personal statement at this stage, but you can contact the university or college offer to send them a revised version instead.

### Clearing

If you don't have a place by 30 June 2019, there will still be lots of options through the UCAS Clearing system. From July to September, higher education providers will advertise their remaining course vacancies and you can then apply to them directly. Clearing vacancies are updated on the UCAS website regularly so if you don't find the course you're looking for straight away, try again later. As well as the UCAS website, official lists are also published in the Telegraph newspaper. Clearing will remain open until 23 October. Around 67,000 students found their place through Clearing in 2017.

The only disadvantage is that, if you have complex support needs or require physical adaptations to buildings, it might be difficult to set up all your support before the start of the academic year. If you have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in England your local authority should maintain this through Clearing until you start university.

It's helpful to do some contingency planning before results day. Prioritise possible courses and universities so you can check against the Clearing listings when they're published. Check UCAS Track to see whether you've got a place. If you're eligible an 'Add Clearing Choice' button will appear on your Track Choices screen.

### Other alternatives

You can call the Exam Results Helpline on 0808 100 900 if your results are higher or lower than expected and you want to explore the options available, including resits, retakes and Clearing. You might also want to think about alternative courses or career paths that don't involve higher education and discuss these with a careers adviser such as employment, vocational routes and gap years.

# Being open about your disability

You might be unsure whether to be open with the university or college about your health condition, learning difficulty or disability or wondering about the best time to do this. It can be helpful to think about what you expect to happen. Colleges and universities sometimes describe the process of telling them about your impairment as ‘disclosing a disability’.

Some students are happy to be open about their impairment because they had support at school or college and they know they want similar support in higher education. The UCAS application is an early opportunity to do this. The personal details section gives you the option of choosing a disability category and describing any additional study support needs. You can also mention your impairment in your personal statement, particularly if you can present it in a way that shows evidence of character and achievement.

Universities and colleges should give you further opportunities to be open about your disability throughout the admissions and induction process and during your course, for example in the run-up to exams or before you start work placements. Whenever you choose to tell the university you should contact the disability adviser in student services.

If you have a visible impairment but feel unhappy about putting personal or medical details in your UCAS application, you could wait until you receive an offer and then contact the university or college Disability Service. If you have a less obvious impairment, you may wonder if it’s safer just to keep everything private.

Some people worry that the university or college might act in a discriminatory way and that admissions staff might deny them a place. Others don’t feel that their situation counts as having a disability, don’t see it as having any effect on their ability to study, or simply don’t like being labelled in this way.

There’s no clear-cut answer as to whether or when you should tell people about your disability. You need to use your own judgement about what’s best for you. However, this section has some information worth considering:



## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Universities and colleges have been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act since 2001 and the Equality Act since 2010. This means they have well-developed systems and procedures for admitting disabled students and making sure they progress in their studies. It would be unlawful for them to refuse you a place or treat you less favourably because of your disability. There is also pressure on universities and colleges to widen access and deliver a better learning experience for students to justify the increasing fees and the implementation of the TEF.



This may be the first time you've had to think about being open about your disability. However, the university will have had many disabled students through its doors and are likely to have experience of supporting students with a similar impairment.

### YOUR ENTITLEMENT TO DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES (DSAS)

DSAs (see Section 9) are not welfare benefits. Don't be put off telling people about your disability and claiming DSAs because you think it means you can't manage your studies.

The definition of disability is very broad and can include specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health conditions, such as depression. You might feel that your needs are not as important as, for example, someone in a wheelchair. However, impairments affect learning in different ways and the disability adviser will be able to help you decide. You don't have to accept the word 'disability' as a label, but it can be used as a way to get support.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Research shows that disabled students who receive DSAs get better final grades than those who choose to go it alone, without asking for or accepting support.

Studying in higher education is very different from studying at school. The university or college should provide you with a course handbook that outlines the study areas and assessments. This will give you a better idea of the demands of the course and help you decide whether to ask for support.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about your disability is protected by the Equality Act and the Data Protection Act. It is sensitive personal information and cannot be passed onto anybody else without your permission. Universities and colleges have policies outlining which members of staff will be told about your disability. With your agreement, this might include the disability adviser, your personal tutor, exams officer and individual lecturers.

### STAYING IN CONTROL

If you decide when to tell people about your disability, you'll have more control over the way it's seen. Take advantage of any opportunities to describe your impairment in a positive way. Your experiences may have provided you with skills that are useful for the course or vocational area you've chosen.

### INTERVIEWS AND ADMISSIONS TESTS

You may need additional support to attend an interview or sit an admissions test, such as a reader or adapted computer. Ask for this well in advance to give the university time to make arrangements. Some courses, for example teacher training, medicine and nursing require you to provide health information to complete registration for a professional body. These checks are to do with health and safety requirements and the skills and abilities you need to carry out certain professional roles. The types of changes that can be made to enable disabled people to do each job must be considered as part of the assessment.

### ADJUSTMENTS CAN BE PUT IN PLACE EARLIER

The earlier that you tell people about your impairment, the easier it will be for adjustments to be put in place in time for the start of your course. If you decide not to tell the university or college, you may end up facing a lot of challenges in the first year on your own.

# Disabled Students' Allowances

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) can cover extra study-related costs that you may incur due to your impairment. It isn't a loan so it doesn't need repaying and the amount you can receive depends on your individual needs and not your income.

## WHAT CAN DSAS PAY FOR?

DSAs can pay towards specialist support you need on your course. There are four allowances for undergraduate students:

**1: Specialist equipment allowance** for computers, insurance and warranty, assistive software, audio capture equipment, multifunction printers/scanners and other equipment. Funding is not generally available for standard size monitors or keyboards and standard mice unless part of a recommendation for a desktop computer. The maximum amount is £5,684, the same for full- and part-time students, for the whole course. You'll have to pay £200 towards the cost of a new computer if you need one to run any recommended assistive software. Don't buy equipment before it is authorised from SFE because reimbursements are not available.

**2: Non-medical helper's allowance** towards specialist notetakers for deaf and visually impaired students, communication support workers, assistive technology training, sign language interpreters, specialist mentors, specialist one-to-one study skill support and other non-medical helpers. The maximum amount is £22,603 per year (pro-rata for part-time students up to a maximum of £16,951).

**3: General allowance** can be used to top up the specialist equipment and non-medical helper's allowances. If you need specialist accommodation for example, with en-suite facilities because of your disability, DSAs may be able to cover the extra costs. However, if the accommodation is managed by your college or university or one of its agents, it will be their responsibility to fund this. The maximum amount is £1,899 (pro-rata for part-time students up to a maximum of £1,424).

**4: Travel allowance** to cover extra travel costs you have because of your disability. You won't get all your travel costs paid but, for example, if you need a taxi to get to the campus instead of using public transport, you will get the difference between the two fares. There is no maximum amount limit. In Scotland there is no DSA travel allowance, but you may get a separate allowance towards transport costs from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

All full-time undergraduates are eligible for support as long as the course is a 'designated course' (most courses of higher education and many foundation degrees at publicly-funded universities are designated).



Part-time students are eligible for DSAs as long as they're studying a designated course which is at least 25% of the full-time equivalent each year. Open and distance learners in the UK are entitled to support as long as the course meets eligibility conditions.

All postgraduate students are eligible on a full-time or part-time basis as above. However, on most postgraduate courses there is a maximum overall allowance of £20,000. International students are not eligible for DSAs.

### APPLYING FOR DSAS

Once you've decided to apply for DSAs, there are several steps before you receive your equipment and support. At certain points you'll need to take an active role in the process. This will be explained to you in letters from your Student Finance company.

#### Who to apply to

**In England:** Apply to Student Finance England. For NHS-funded courses apply to NHS Student Bursaries.

 [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim)

**In Wales:** Apply to Student Finance Wales. For NHS funded courses apply to NHS Wales Student Awards Unit.

 [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

 [www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)

**In Scotland:** Apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for any course.

 [www.saas.gov.uk/forms\\_and\\_guides/dsa.htm](http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm)

**In Northern Ireland:** Apply to your regional Education Authority (EA).

You don't need to have a confirmed place at university before you apply for DSA's. It's best to apply early in the year so you have time to respond to any letters and emails before the summer holidays.

You can usually apply online for DSAs at the same time as making your main application. The application for DSAs should be on your 'to do' list. If it isn't, select 'change your circumstances' to apply. If you're applying for student finance by post or if you don't need student finance, you can apply for DSAs by completing a DSA1 paper form. You can download the form from the websites below.

Before applying for DSAs it can be helpful to have an early discussion with the disability adviser. Colleges and universities are expected to provide support as part of their duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equality Act 2010. They have direct responsibility for providing certain types of non-medical help (NMH), such as readers, scribes, proof readers, practical and library support assistants.

The disability adviser can also help you complete the application form for DSAs if needed.

You'll need to submit medical evidence of your impairment to your Student Finance company. The evidence can be a diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty, or a letter from your doctor or consultant stating the nature of your condition and ideally briefly explaining how it affects you.

If you have an EHC Plan in England, this can also support the diagnosis and be used to indicate the areas where you need support.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you will need to send your dyslexia diagnostic assessment – which tells you about your own learning profile. The assessment needs to have been carried out after your 16th birthday. If the diagnostic assessment was carried out after 2011, the psychologist must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Student Finance will write or email you to confirm you're eligible for DSAs. If you tick the 'consent to share' box, a copy will be sent to Disability Services at your first-choice university or college.

### Needs assessment

Student Finance will write to you about a needs assessment. Some students worry about what this involves, especially if they've had a previous assessment where their voice wasn't heard. However, the needs assessment for DSAs is not like this. Its purpose is to make sure you have the best possible opportunity in higher education to show your abilities and achieve your goals.

The needs assessor will sit down with you, discuss your course and identify areas where you might benefit from support, for example, using computer technology. They might show you different equipment and software, discuss the features and give you the chance to use it.

Assessors are experienced in the range of equipment and human support that's available and will help you decide what's best. They will then write a report making recommendations and send it to Student Finance, and they'll send you a copy as well if you wish. The assessor doesn't make the final decision on what you're entitled to. The report may also identify areas where support is needed but falls outside the scope of DSAs. You could share this with your college or university and use it as a basis to discuss reasonable adjustments.

### Making an appointment

There are assessment centres across the country that offer specialist needs assessment services for students going into higher education. You will need to choose one and make an appointment to visit. Alternative arrangements can be made if you have an impairment which makes it very difficult to travel. Most students can find a centre that is

either near home or their preferred university – it's your choice where to go.

All assessment centres have to meet quality standards and the organisation that sets and checks these standards is called DSA-QAG (Disabled Students Allowance-Quality Assurance Group). Student Finance will direct you to the DSA-QAG website where you can find an up to date list of assessment centres and enter your postcode to find one near you.

You'll need to phone or email the assessment centre for an appointment. If you don't make an appointment and you don't have a needs assessment, Student Finance can't process your DSA application.

### GETTING SUPPORT IN PLACE

Once Student Finance receive the assessor's report, they will write to you to confirm your entitlement and advise you how to order any recommended equipment. They will also recommend that you contact the disability adviser at your first-choice university to organise personal support such as one-to-one dyslexia support. You will get a copy of the report too.

These steps need to be completed to get your support in place for the beginning of your first term. If you leave it late, you may find it difficult to get a convenient appointment. You can ask Student Finance or your first-choice university for advice at any time. They are aware that it may seem a bit daunting and are very experienced in helping students through the process.

#### For more information

The Disability Rights UK student helpline can provide further information about DSAs and the relevant grievance procedures in case of any problems.

**T** 0330 995 0414

**E** [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## Tegan Rawlinson

BSc (Hons) Chemistry, University of York

**I have dyslexia and multiple medical conditions, including asthma and a condition called Allergic Broncho-Pulmonary Aspergillosis, all of which affect me daily.**



Studying chemistry at university, away from home, is a scary thought in general. Trying to tackle my degree, social life and my disability was totally terrifying. However I needn't have worried. All the support I needed was here. I knew that chemistry was going to be very demanding in terms of contact hours, but I knew my passion for the subject was not going to be stopped by my disabilities.

The first thing I did was apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) which enabled me to have a reader and writer in exams, any extra books I needed and gave me specialist equipment which helps me do my work.

When I decided York was my first choice, Disability Services and the Chemistry department's disability adviser contacted me. Disability Services were really helpful with sorting out the forms I needed to fill in. The Chemistry disability adviser has helped in many ways; printing my handouts on green paper, releasing them early and telling staff about my extra needs.

I feel comfortable explaining problems, knowing they will try their best to sort it out.

The department has been amazingly supportive and I've been given the help I need. For example; no one marks my spellings in my work, in exams I have a reader and writer and the demonstrators in labs are aware that I might need more help. Another main help is my supervisor, who I know well and is always ready to help me. All of this support is amazing but it does require effort. It won't just come to you; you have to be honest and ask for it when you need it.

I can't drink due my medication. This worried me as I wondered how others were going to accept this. I really shouldn't have worried about this because I found that everyone just accepted it. You don't need alcohol to have a good time.

As I take longer to do all my work and get tired more, I knew joining multiple societies and attending regularly wasn't going to work. I tried out a few at the beginning and chose Cassoc (Catholic Student Society). Here I made lifelong friends and I'm the press and publicity rep.

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*I have grown in confidence, not just in my subject but within myself. I have learned to deal with my disabilities knowing the support is there for me. A disability is no reason to hold back.*

It's not all plain sailing. I found it hard constantly explaining why I use green paper, wear green glasses and take medication during lectures. However, since finding my close friends it doesn't matter – they just accept it and I no longer feel embarrassed.

# Personal care and support

Personal care and support is the practical help you need for your daily life. For example; support with cooking, using the toilet, washing, dressing and taking medicine. When you go to university or college, you may also need assistance with tasks such as cleaning, correspondence, shopping and transport in order to remain independent.

Organising personal care when you go to university or college can be complicated. You should start making arrangements as early as possible. If time is tight, don't worry. It's still possible to get the right support but you'll need to take some proactive steps. This includes letting your local authority know you're planning to go to university or college and contacting disability services at the places you're interested in.

## FUNDING PERSONAL CARE

Disabled Students' Allowances (Section 9) only cover education, not care costs. When you go to university your care package should be funded by the local authority where you're 'ordinarily resident.' You can't be 'ordinarily resident' in two areas. You'll need to show which local authority area you have the strongest links to. For many students this is the area they come from. This might be because they plan to go home at holiday time, their friends and family live there, and they plan to return after graduating.

## THE PROCESS

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, young disabled students with education, health and/or social care requirements can ask for an assessment of their needs. Local authorities in England must carry out an assessment and prepare an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan for those who need one. If you have an EHC Plan you can request a personal budget. This will give you greater choice and control about how you buy your support whilst studying and who you choose to provide the service.

If you're not eligible for an EHC Plan, you may still be eligible for an assessment from your local authority Adult Social Care Department under the Care Act 2014. Young disabled people should already have a transition plan which identifies the most appropriate support systems to meet your needs and aims.

You can ask adult services for a Child's Needs Assessment (CNA) at any time before your 18th birthday if you're likely to have care and support needs from age 18. This gives you an indication of the care available and your likely personal budget to help you plan ahead. Local authorities should also use these assessments to help them plan the support that they will provide while you're in higher education.

If you're considering personal care for the first time, contact your local Adult Social Care Department. You can ask for an assessment of your care and support needs (carried out by a trained assessor or social worker). The assessment of need covers six areas: personal and social care, health care, accommodation, finance, education, employment and leisure, transport and access.

If you're eligible for support, you'll be offered a personal budget. This can be managed in different ways. The options are:

- direct payments (cash instead of services)
- your local authority manages the budget
- a third party manages the money.

You can have input into all of these. The most important thing is for you to have choice and control over the services you receive.

If you receive personal care and move permanently to the area where you're studying, the Care Act 2014 provides for 'portability or continuity of care'. This means your care and support needs should continue to be met if you move to live in another local authority area. This usually lasts until the new local authority carries out a new needs assessment. Local authorities have a legal duty to meet national criteria which set minimum thresholds for care and support, and follow Care and Statutory Guidance on charging if they want you to contribute to the cost. You may choose to return home for holiday periods and maintain your ordinary residence status. Either way you'll need to ask for a review of your services.

### ORGANISING YOUR SUPPORT

If you require personal care, think about what you need over a 24-hour period: during lectures, seminars, library periods, free time outside of learning and any night time support. Make sure to include any other weekly or monthly support you need. You also need to consider where you'll spend vacations. Keep a diary for a few weeks to record your daily needs and the difficulties you have carrying out personal tasks and daily activities. Once you've established your local authority and how your personal care will be funded, you should be offered an 'indicative budget'. You then need to write a care and support plan. You can do this yourself or with assistance – some local authorities offer independent support planners. Your plan will need to demonstrate how you'll meet the outcomes you want, and be signed off by the local authority.

You should be given a choice about managing your personal budget. If you choose direct payments you'll have more flexibility. You could become an Individual Employer and employ your own personal assistants. This comes with certain responsibilities, such as dealing with tax and national insurance, but lots of support is available.

Alternatively, you could contract with a domiciliary care agency. Either way a local Disabled People's Organisation will be able to help you decide what's right for you.

Universities and colleges that provide personal care and domiciliary agencies providing personal care in a student's home or temporary residence must be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – you can check the CQC website for up-to-date information on the quality of their services.

If you opt for a direct payment and choose to be an Individual Employer, the Skills for Care website has an excellent range of resources to help you recruit personal assistants. Additionally, many areas across the country provide Personal Assistant Registers, listing people who are interested in personal care roles and available for work. Disability Rights UK also has an online Resource Directory:

 [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Volunteering Matters

This national charity recruits full-time volunteers to help disabled people live independently in the community. Student Choices is their service for disabled students who need help at university or college. Volunteers are often recent graduates or planning to go to university, so they have experience of or an interest in higher education. A staff member at the university acts as a supervisor.

 <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk>

### OTHER LOCAL SERVICES

Register with a local GP as soon as possible, particularly if you have health related issues that need monitoring. Further information about registering with a GP is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). The disability adviser at the university or college may be able to help co-ordinate support and refer you to local services that can help with personal care.

# Other financial help

In addition to the financial support described in Sections 2 and 9, there are a number of other sources of help available.

## ADULT DEPENDANTS' GRANT

If you're studying a full-time course and have a partner or another adult who depends on you financially, you may be entitled to an Adult Dependants' Grant. The maximum amount available is £3,007 per year. Contact your awarding authority for more information.

## CHILDCARE GRANT

In England and Wales, full-time students with children in registered childcare can apply for a Childcare Grant. The grant pays 85% of actual costs up to a maximum of £169.31 per week for one child and £290.27 per week for two or more children. Contact your awarding authority for more information. In Scotland you can apply for help from the Higher Education Childcare Fund. Lone parents can apply for an additional grant from SAAS.

## PARENTS' LEARNING ALLOWANCE

Full-time students with dependent children may be able to apply for help with course costs such as books, materials and travel. The amount you can receive depends on your household income. The maximum allowance is £1,716 per year.

## HARDSHIP/DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

Each UK country has its own schemes for supporting students facing financial hardship. Priority is usually given to part-time students, students with children, especially single parents, mature students, disabled students and care leavers. The funds can sometimes be used to pay for diagnostic assessments for dyslexia or the £200 contribution towards laptops recommended through DSAs. Contact student services at your university or college for details of how to apply.

## DISABILITY AND WELFARE BENEFITS

Most full-time higher education students can't claim welfare benefits. However, students who get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) may be able to receive more support with living costs than other students. It's important to tell the Benefits Agency, Jobcentre Plus and other relevant agencies that you're starting a course as this counts as a change of circumstances. For individual advice it's best to speak with a welfare rights specialist in the student money advice team at your university or college or try your local Citizens Advice Bureau.



## Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP has replaced Disability Living Allowance for people between the ages of 16 and 64. PIP is a non-means tested benefit for people who need help taking part in everyday life or find it difficult to get around. It is always paid on top of other benefits.

### For more information

Disability Rights UK publishes *Personal Independence Payment – A guide to making a claim*, free to download from:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip)

### UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal Credit is a new benefit which has been rolled out across the UK to replace working age means-tested benefits. No new claims can be made for legacy benefits such as income-related ESA and Housing Benefit. It is not possible now to make a new claim for one of the previous working age means-tested benefits. The only exception to this is if you are already receiving Housing Benefit and move to new accommodation within the same local authority area.

Most full-time students are not able to claim Universal Credit, but there are exceptions. For example, if you're disabled, have been assessed as having a limited capability for work and receive PIP.

If you have not yet been assessed as having a limited capability for work, the DWP is likely to refuse your Universal Credit claim. You should claim New Style (contributory) ESA on a credits-only basis to have your limited capability for work assessed.

CPAG Scotland has produced a detailed factsheet on students and UC:

[www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-scot-factsheet-UC%20student-May18.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-scot-factsheet-UC%20student-May18.pdf)

Although the CPAG factsheet is for Scottish students, the situation is similar across the UK. Higher education students eligible for UC will usually be placed in the 'no work-related requirements' group for the whole academic year.

#### For more information

Disability Rights UK produces a range of factsheets on studying and claiming benefits. You can find them on our website:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

### CHARITABLE TRUSTS

If you have extra disability-related costs which can't be covered by statutory funding or other sources, you could try applying to a charitable trust such as the Snowdon Trust [www.snowdontrust.org](http://www.snowdontrust.org). Snowdon bursaries are made for one or two years and can be up to £3,000. You can apply between 1 February and 31 August for the academic year starting in September. The panel also meets in October to consider late applications – funds permitting.

#### For more information

Disability Rights UK produces a free factsheet called *Funding from charitable trusts*. You can find it on our website:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)



# After you arrive

The first few weeks at university or college are usually very exciting and can also be a little nerve-wracking. It's good to allow yourself some time to settle into a routine. Sometimes there are practical difficulties, but these can usually be resolved without too much trouble. If you do experience any difficulties, remember disability services are there to help you.

When you first arrive at university or college there'll be lots of exciting opportunities to meet people and get to know your surroundings, often as part of a special 'Freshers' Week'.

It can take a few weeks to get into a routine and you might need some time to get used to working with any interpreters, guides or volunteers.

Similarly, it may take a while to learn to use any new equipment. If you need training on the equipment or help setting it up, this can be paid for by the specialist equipment allowance of your DSAs.

It's important to remember that teaching and learning in higher education can be very different from school or college. Teaching staff may not immediately adapt their teaching styles enough to meet your needs. They may forget what you need or be unsure what to do. Try to establish relationships with staff on your course early on such as your personal tutor or the programme administrator. If you don't feel confident about approaching academic staff yourself, ask the disability adviser to speak to them for you.

## INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Recently, the government has emphasised the role that providers play in ensuring as broad a range of people as possible are able to study in higher education. For this to happen, courses must be accessible, not just in terms of the buildings where classes are delivered, but the teaching methods that are used too.

Increasingly, HE staff are making adjustments to the way they teach courses. For example, teaching staff may be able to give you handouts for lectures and seminars in advance. Often these will be made available on the university's virtual learning environment (VLE). This means you can do the required reading and studying before the teaching has been delivered. It also allows you to manipulate materials into the format which best suits your learning preferences. Some universities and colleges also record lectures and make these available to all students after the teaching session has been delivered.

## LEARNING SUPPORT PLANS

Most providers will have a system in place through which your individual needs are identified and documented. These are usually referred to as Learning Support Plans (LSPs) or Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

You may have had an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) written for you at school or college. ILPs/LSPs are very similar to these documents. They will outline the kinds of support you're likely to receive such as adjustments to exams or support in the classroom, such as note takers.

ILPs/LSPs are usually written and implemented by disability service staff in your HEP. In some HEPs, there are also staff based in academic departments who take responsibility for implementing your ILP/LSP. These staff vary between HEPs and may be your personal tutor, your head of programme or another designated member of teaching or administrative staff.

## Joe Weaver

BA (Hons) Applied Arts, University of Wolverhampton

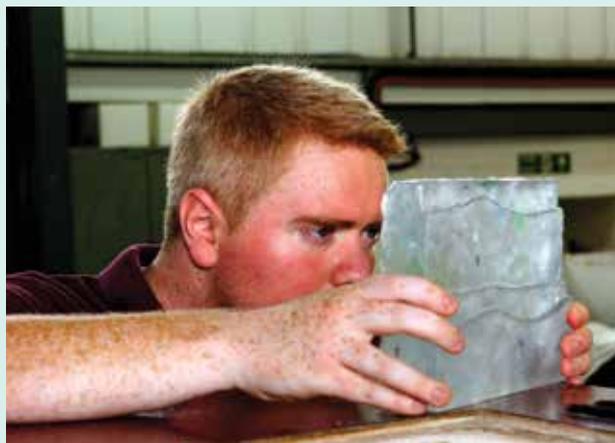
**My course involves lots of practical work based on three-dimensional forms and working with materials such as glass, ceramics and metals.**

Over the last three years I have been supported by sign language interpreters, manual notetakers and English support tutors. The support I have received has been very helpful because it makes things easier for me to access my studies.



Normally the interpreters are with me in the lectures. I have a manual notetaker because I have to concentrate on the interpreter all the time to translate what the lecturer is saying. It is difficult for me to watch and write at the same time. The notetaker is very useful. They pick up all the important information and give it to me to take home and re-cap.

I also have English support tutorials. These are normally one hour every week and I can use sign language with the tutor which makes it easier for me to communicate with her. It is very useful for all the deaf students to have English support tutorials because they help to polish up grammar and correct mistakes in sentences.



“

*It is important to let my lecturer know that I have an English support tutor because English is my second language. My first language is BSL.*

Every week I bring my essays and dissertation to show my tutor and we discuss how it needs to improve and the best way to make it easier and clearer for my lecturer to read. It is important to let my lecturer know that I have an English support tutor because English is my second language. My first language is BSL.

At the University of Wolverhampton, they have a Student Enabling Centre which has three full-time interpreters and group of notetakers. Their responsibility is to book freelance interpreters from outside for my lectures. I receive Disabled Students' Allowances to pay the cost of the interpreters, notetakers and English support tutorials.

It's important to find out what system is in place at your institution and don't just assume the LSP/ILP will get fully implemented. You will need to be proactive if you want to get the most out of the support which is available.

### ASSESSMENTS

Under the Equality Act, institutions must make reasonable adjustments to their assessment processes so that disabled students aren't disadvantaged. Adjustments might include alternative methods of assessment, flexibility with deadlines, or providing special equipment and other support. These arrangements are usually made through the disability adviser liaising with academic staff.

Different courses have different expectations when it comes to fulfilling course assessments and the types of adjustments they can make. If you previously had support at school or college, it's important to clarify if the approach will differ at this level. Some professional courses such as nursing or law may have strict assessment protocols, which mean you have to demonstrate that you can meet the 'competencies' required to enter that profession. It's worth having a conversation with course staff to discuss the range of adjustments available.

### PERSONAL SUPPORT

Recently, funding for some types of support (such as non-specialist note taking) has been removed from DSAs. However, if you require this support to access your course equitably, then it can be provided as a reasonable adjustment by your HEP.

Some students can claim DSAs to pay for regular one-to-one support with a tutor who is specially qualified to provide additional tuition. It's important to discuss this support in your needs assessment if you go through this route. This type of support is highly successful for many students and can be on a weekly basis or less frequently if you feel you are OK.

A similar specialist mentoring service is also available and is paid for through DSAs. Specialist mentors can help you with study related issues such as organising your time, dealing with problems which arise on your course and becoming more familiar with studying at this level of education.

When you know your timetable of classes it's important that you tell your support workers promptly. This will make sure that everyone is in the right place at the right time. If you find you can't attend once an appointment is booked, you must cancel it in advance.

### YOUR HEALTH

If your disability affects your health, your work may start to be affected. Providers should be able to make adjustments for you, for example, providing notes for any study sessions you have missed. Alternative arrangements for assignments and exams might also be available. Talk to your tutor or the disability adviser if you start to fall behind. Don't wait until it becomes a big problem.

### OTHER SUPPORT

Some providers have disabled students' groups or societies, where you can speak to other students and share your frustrations. Most Students' Unions have a welfare officer who can give advice or act as your advocate. Counsellors can be helpful if you want to talk through issues with someone.

### COMPLAINTS

As the stories in this guide show, people living with a health condition, learning difficulty or disability usually have very positive experiences in higher education. Most providers have excellent support arrangements and any difficulties can be quickly resolved.

Occasionally things don't work out as they should. If you have a complaint, the first step should be to contact your tutor and/or disability adviser and try and sort things out informally.

If this doesn't work, you would then need to follow the provider's internal complaints procedure and make a formal complaint.

If you go through the internal process and you're still not happy with the outcome, you can take your complaint to The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) in England and Wales or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in Scotland.

In rare cases, difficult situations are not worked out at the university level and students may choose to get legal advice.

#### For more information

For information on making a complaint and your rights under the Equality Act, please refer to the Disability Rights UK factsheets:

- *Making a complaint*
- *Understanding the Equality Act: information for disabled students*

These can be downloaded free from the publications section of our website:

- [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets)

Our student helpline can provide information about grievance procedures if you experience problems getting Disabled Students' Allowances or support from your college or university.

• 0330 995 0414

• [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

#### THE EQUALITY ACT

The Equality Act applies to all areas of studying including admissions, the provision of education, student services and exclusions. Universities and colleges must not discriminate against you either directly or indirectly, or for any reason connected with your disability. You are also protected against harassment and victimisation.

Providers should always make reasonable adjustments to make sure that you're not substantially disadvantaged on your course.

If you feel that a college or university has discriminated against you, the Equality Advisory and Support Service can support you to resolve the issue informally. In some cases they may write to a college or university on your behalf to try and bring about a resolution.

• 0808 800 0082

• [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)

Visit the Disability Rights UK website for up-to-date information and contact details.

If you decide that you want to take a case further under the Equality Act, you should refer to a legal advisory service, such as Community Legal Advice or the Law Centres Federation.

If you want to take a case to court, you must lodge it with the court within six months of the discrimination taking place. This may be extended to eight months if you use a conciliation service or the OIA. However, it's best to take legal advice before suspending any action. The OIA can't look at complaints about admissions and may advise other forums are more appropriate for certain kinds of discrimination.

#### For more information

The Equality and Human Rights Commission website has a series of guidance documents which can be used as a guide for cases.

• [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Although mainly for legal professionals, you may find it useful to refer to their education guidance document (non-statutory Code of Practice):

- *What equality law means for you as an education provider – further and higher education*

# Resources

## WEBSITES

### Access to Higher Education

[www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)

Information about the Access to Higher Education Diploma which prepares people without traditional qualifications for study at university.

### Aim Higher

<http://disability-directory.aimhigherlondonsouth.org.uk>

Aim Higher's Disability Services Directory is a searchable resource which identifies the support available to disabled learners across London universities.

### Bright Knowledge

[www.brightknowledge.org](http://www.brightknowledge.org)

The Bright Knowledge resource library has information about higher education, money and careers.

### Careersbox

[www.careersbox.co.uk](http://www.careersbox.co.uk)

Free online library of careers-related films.

### Careers Wales

[www.careerswales.com/en/](http://www.careerswales.com/en/)

Careers information and advice as well as contact details for local careers centres in Wales.

### Care Quality Commission

[www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/services-we-regulate/find-services-offering-care-home](http://www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/services-we-regulate/find-services-offering-care-home)

Information about colleges, universities and domiciliary care organisations that provide personal care in your home.

### Council for Disabled Children

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources>

SEND reforms: What children and young people need to know. Series of factsheets, films and posters to help disabled young people understand the key themes of EHC plans, Post-16 support, the Local Offer and making decisions.

### Money Saving Expert

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/family](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family)

See Students and Schools section for money saving tips, 20 key facts on tuition fees, student loans and grants.

### National Careers Service

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Career planning, information and advice service for students in England.

### Premia Project

[www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

Collection of downloadable resources designed to make the research environment more accessible to disabled postgraduate research students.

### Prospects

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Information on graduate careers and postgraduate study.

### Push Online

[www.push.co.uk](http://www.push.co.uk)

Information about choosing a university, student life, clearing and Push publications.

### UK Research and Innovation

[www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities and government. It brings together the seven Research Councils UK, Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England. (The Research Councils cover medical and biological sciences, astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities.

### Postgraduate search

[www.postgraduatesearch.com/funding](http://www.postgraduatesearch.com/funding)

This site provides a freely searchable database of the financial help that is available to postgraduate students.

### Skills Development Scotland

[www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

Information on education opportunities, career planning, Individual Learning Accounts and finding a local careers centre in Scotland.

### Student Finance

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

Quick guides to student finance and student loan repayments.

### The Student Room

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

Forum and discussion areas for sharing experiences and thoughts about studying in higher education. The website also contains specific resources for mature students, including an interactive map, a mature student forum and video case studies.

### Transition Information Network (TIN)

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/transition-information-network>

News, resources and events on issues relating to transition, designed to be useful to disabled young people, parents/carers and professionals.

### UK Course Finder

[www.ukcoursefinder.com](http://www.ukcoursefinder.com)

Has an interesting questionnaire and allows you to search for courses based on study style, location and type of provider.

### unistats

<http://unistats.ac.uk>

Helps students compare universities and colleges based on satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey, official data on jobs and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students.



## PUBLICATIONS

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### A Guide to Disclosure

Published by AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability based in Ireland. Available from:

 [www.ahead.ie](http://www.ahead.ie)

### Disability Rights UK factsheets

Disability Rights UK produces a range of factsheets for disabled students. They cover topics such as the Equality Act, telling people about your disability, funding and adjustments for disabled students.

 [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets)

We also produce a publication called *Personal Independence Payment – A guide to making a claim*.

 [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip)

### Employing personal assistants toolkit

Online guide to the process of employing a personal assistant, what to do when they are working for you as well as helping you to understand your responsibilities as an employer and your legal obligations.

 [www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk](http://www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk)

### Everybody Included: The SEND Code of Practice explained

Explanation of what a disabled young person should experience before and during transition.

 [www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources/everybody-included-the-send-code-of-practice-explained.html](http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources/everybody-included-the-send-code-of-practice-explained.html)

### Extra help – Disabled Students' Allowances

A guide to Disabled Students' Allowances in higher education. Available from

 [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/further-information](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/further-information)

### HEAP 2019: University Degree Course Offers

Published by Trotman Education. A guide to choosing courses of higher education.

### Ordinary Residence: Guidance on the identification of the ordinary residence of people in need of community care services

The Department of Health guidance on the responsibilities of local authorities and funding personal care for students in England.

W [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### Prospects Postgraduate Study Guide

A comprehensive guide to funding postgraduate study. Available in most university careers services or online.

### Student Awards Agency for Scotland Funding Guide 2019-2020

Free booklet with information on funding for undergraduates in Scotland. Available from SAAS in hard copy or on their website:

W [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

### Supporting STEM Students with dyslexia

Free good practice guide for academic staff produced by the Institute of Physics. Available from:

W [www.iop.org](http://www.iop.org)

### The Complete University Guide 2019

Contains league tables on more than 70 subject areas and over 100 UK universities.

## ORGANISATIONS

### EDUCATION

#### Disabled Students' Allowances Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG)

Central Chambers, Suite 350, 4th Floor, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LD

T 0141 227 6771

E [administration@dsa-qag.org.uk](mailto:administration@dsa-qag.org.uk)

W [www.dsa-qag.org.uk](http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk)

Provides students with a database of registered assessment centres offering needs assessments for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). They also have information about university disability advisers and suppliers of disability equipment.

#### Erasmus

T 01619577755

E [erasmusplus.enquiries@britishcouncil.org](mailto:erasmusplus.enquiries@britishcouncil.org)

W <https://erasmusplus.org.uk>

Advice and information on the Erasmus educational exchange programme and funding for study or work abroad.

#### NHS Student Bursaries

Ridgway House, Northgate Close, Middlebrook, Horwich, Bolton BL6 6PQ

T 0300 330 1345

E Complete online form

#### NUS (National Union of Students)

NUS HQ, Macadam House, 275 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8QB

T 0845 5210 262

E Complete the online form

W [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/nationalunionofstudents](http://www.facebook.com/nationalunionofstudents)

Give advice and produce information on welfare rights for students

#### NUS-USI (Union of Students in Ireland)

42 Dublin Road, Belfast BT2 7HN

T 028 9024 4641

E [info@nistudents.org](mailto:info@nistudents.org)

W <http://nus-usi.org>

The student movement in Northern Ireland.

#### NUS Scotland

1 Papermill Wynd, McDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4QL

T 0131 556 6598

E [mail@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:mail@nus-scotland.org.uk)

W [www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-scotland](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-scotland)

Provides information to affiliated student associations in Scotland.

#### NUS Wales/UCMC

2nd floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL

T 02920 435 390

E [office@nus-wales.org.uk](mailto:office@nus-wales.org.uk)

W [www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-wales](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-wales)

Provides information, support, training and guidance to affiliated student associations.

### Social Work Bursaries

PO Box 141, Hesketh House, 200-220 Broadway, Fleetwood, FY7 9AS

**T** 0300 330 1342

**W** [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services)

**E** Complete online form

Information on NHS and social work bursaries, payment dates and downloadable application forms.

### Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3UT

**T** 0300 555 0505; textphone 0131 244 5107  
Phone line open Mon to Thurs 8.30-17.00 and Fri 8.30-16.30

**E** Select an enquiry subject on the website and complete the online form.

**W** [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

SAAS is the awarding authority in Scotland.

### Student Finance England

PO Box 210, Darlington DL1 9HJ

**T** 0300 100 0607

Textphone 0300 100 0622

Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.00-20.00  
Sat and Sun 9.00-16.00

**W** [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)  
[www.twitter.com/SF\\_England](https://www.twitter.com/SF_England)  
[www.facebook.com/SFEngland](https://www.facebook.com/SFEngland)

Provides information and services to students who normally live in England. They also have a Facebook app to walk you through the steps to applying at [apps.facebook.com/financeguide](https://apps.facebook.com/financeguide)

### Student Finance Northern Ireland

**T** 0300 100 0077

Textphone 0300 100 0625

Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.00-20.00, Sat and Sun 9.00-16.00

**W** [www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)

Student Finance Northern Ireland provides information and services to students who normally live in Northern Ireland.

### Student Finance Wales

**T** 0300 200 4050; textphone 0300 100 1693  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.00-18.00

**W** [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

### The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

2nd Floor, Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading RG1 3AB

**T** 0118 959 9813

**E** [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)

**W** [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)  
[www.twitter.com/oiahe](https://www.twitter.com/oiahe)

An independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

### UCAS (The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

**T** 0371 468 0468

Textphone 18001 0371 468 0468

Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.30-18.00

**E** [enquiries@ucas.com](mailto:enquiries@ucas.com)

**W** [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
[www.facebook.com/ucasonline](https://www.facebook.com/ucasonline)  
[www.twitter.com/UCAS\\_online](https://www.twitter.com/UCAS_online)

The central admissions system, which processes applications for higher education.

### UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs

3-5 Islington High Street, London N1 9LQ

**T** Advice service 020 7788 9214

Textphone 18001 020 7788 9214

Advice line open Mon to Fri 13.00-16.00 (UK time)

**W** [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

## DISABILITY

### Action on Hearing Loss

1-3 Highbury Station Road, London N1 1SE

**T** 0808 808 0123

Phone line open Mon to Fri 9.00-17.00

SMS 0780 0000 360

**E** [informationline@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:informationline@hearingloss.org.uk)

**W** [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

Campaigns and lobbies to raise awareness of hearing loss and tinnitus and provides support services for deaf and hard of hearing people.

**Arthritis Care**

Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N 8TS

**T** 0300 790 0400

Helpline 0808 800 4050

Phone line open Tues 09.30-17.00

**E** info@arthritiscare.org.uk

**W** www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Services included a confidential helpline, self-management and awareness training for people with arthritis and healthcare professionals, and local activity and support.

**British Dyslexia Association (BDA)**

Unit 6a Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane, Bracknell RG12 7BW

**T** 0333 405 4555

Helpline 0333 405 4567

Phone line open Tues 10.00-13.00

and Wed – Thurs 10.00-15.00

**E** helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk

**W** www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Offers information, advice and support to people with dyslexia.

**Epilepsy Action**

New Anstey House, Gate Way Drive, Yeadon, Leeds LS19 7XY

**T** 0808 800 5050

Phone lines open Mon to Thurs 8.30-20.00,

Fri 8.30-4.30 and Sat 10.00-16.00

**E** helpline@epilepsy.org.uk

**W** www.epilepsy.org.uk

Offers a range of services including information and advice.

**Equality Advisory and Support Service**

Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3AQ

**T** 0808 800 0082

Phone lines open Mon to Fri 09.00-19.00

and Sat 10.00-14.00

Textphone 0808 800 0084

**F** 0800 090 2305

**E** Freepost EASS Helpline FPN6521

**W** www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

A helpline for individuals advising and assisting on issues relating to equality and human rights across England, Scotland and Wales.

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (England)**

Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3AQ

**T** 0161 829 8100

**F** 0161 829 8110

**E** correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Produces government information booklets on equality and human rights issues including the Equality Act.

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland)**

151 West George Street, Glasgow G2 2JJ

**T** 0141 228 5910

**E** scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (Wales)**

Block 1, Spur D, Government Buildings, St Agnes Road, Gabalfa, Cardiff CF14 4YJ

**T** 02920 447710

**F** 02920 447712

**E** wales@equalityhumanrights.com

**W** www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

**Lead Scotland**

Room B05 Edinburgh Napier University, 14 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5DT

**T** 0131 228 9441

Textphone 18001 0131 228 9441

Helpline service 0800 999 2568

Open Mon, Wed and Thurs 14.00-16.00,

Tues and Fri 10.00-12.00

**F** 0131 229 6941

**E** enquiries@lead.org.uk

**W** www.lead.org.uk

Enables disabled adults and carers to access inclusive learning opportunities in Scotland. They also run an information and advice service for disabled students in Scotland.



### Mind

15-19 Broadway, London E15 4BQ

**T** Mind infoline 0300 123 3393 or text 86463

Open Mon to Fri 9.00-18.00

Mind legal line 0300 466 6463

Open Mon to Fri 9.00-18.00

**E** info@mind.org.uk

**W** www.mind.org.uk

Provides an information service and information booklets about mental health.

### Multiple Sclerosis Society

MS National Centre, 372 Edgware Road, London NW2 6ND

**T** England: 020 8438 0700

Scotland: 0131 335 4050

NI: 02890 802 802

Wales: 020 8438 0700

Helpline 0808 800 8000

Open Mon to Fri 9.00-21.00

**E** helpline@mssociety.org.uk

**W** www.mssociety.org.uk

Provides information and support in the UK to anyone affected by MS from their network of over 350 local branches.

### National Autistic Society

393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG

**T** 020 7833 2299

Helpline 0808 800 4104

Open Mon to Thurs 10.00-16.00  
and Fri 9.00-15.00

**F** 020 7833 9666

**E** nas@nas.org.uk

**W** www.autism.org.uk

Provides information, advice and support to people with autism and Asperger syndrome and their families.

### RNIB

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

**T** 020 7388 1266

Helpline 0303 123 9999

Open Mon to Fri 8.00-20.00 and Sat 9.00-13.00

**E** helpline@rnib.org.uk

**W** www.rnib.org.uk

RNIB offers advice and specialist DSA assessments in study needs and access technology for blind and partially sighted learners.

### Scope

Here East Press Centre, 14 East Bay Lane, E15 2GW

**T** 0808 800 3333

Open Mon to Fri 9.00-17.00

**E** helpline@scope.org.uk

**W** www.scope.org.uk

Offers a range of services for disabled children and adults, with a focus on people with cerebral palsy or those whose support needs are not met elsewhere.

### Scottish Sensory Centre

Moray House, School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AQ

**T** 0131 651 6501

**F** 0131 651 6502

**E** sscmail@ed.ac.uk

**W** www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk

An information service and training organisation for those interested in the education of children and young people with sensory impairment.

### Trailblazers

61a Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BU

**T** 020 7803 4846

**E** trailblazers@muscular-dystrophy.org

**W** www.muscular dystrophyuk.org/campaign-for-independent-living/trailblazers

Trailblazers is a national network of more than 400 young disabled people. They aim to fight the social injustices experienced by young disabled people and to ensure they can gain access to education and employment. They are part of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

### Volunteering Matters

The Levy Centre, 18-24 Lower Caption, London E5 0PD

**T** 020 3780 5870

**E** Complete online form

**W** https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk

Involves people in high quality volunteering and learning opportunities. Places young people as volunteers to work as personal assistants.



Free to download

## Into Apprenticeships

### The guide for disabled people

Doing an apprenticeship is a great way to earn a salary, get qualifications and develop your career. This guide is designed to help disabled people, parents and advisers answer the key questions about applying for apprenticeships in England.

#### The guide includes:

- The benefits of an apprenticeship, how to apply, find vacancies, and what support is available in the workplace
- Case studies where disabled students write about their own experiences
- A resources section listing helpful websites, publications and organisations

“We wrote Into Apprenticeships to deal with all the common questions we receive about how to find an apprenticeship and whether the training will be accessible. The stories written by disabled apprentices about their experiences are really inspiring and we hope this guide will help you make the right choices and get the support you need”

Tony Stevens, Careers guidance specialist and adviser

You can buy our publications online at [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)



## Expert training and advice for colleges and universities

Disability Rights UK is a registered charity with expert trainers and advisers on disability issues. We have a unique perspective as we are led by disabled people and support people across the UK with every type of impairment.

#### Our services for education providers include:

- Disability Confidence and Equality Act training
- Benefits training for student advisers in FE or HE
- Disability advice line services for employees and HR professionals
- Membership packages including access to our range of helplines and free copies of our education publications

#### For more information please contact:

Anna Fahy

Telephone: 020 3687 0775

[anna.fahy@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:anna.fahy@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

Disability Rights UK is a charity. We work for a society in which everyone can participate equally.

We are disabled people leading change and we aim to be the largest national pan-disability organisation, led, run and controlled by disabled people.

Disability Rights UK has three main priorities:

- 1 Independent living – getting a life
- 2 Career opportunities – getting work, education and skills
- 3 Influencing public attitudes and behaviours – seeking a sea change in perceptions of disability and tackling hostility, bullying and hate crime.

### Other publications

We are authors of the *Disability Rights Handbook*, our annual guide to welfare benefits and services.

We also publish *Into Apprenticeships*, a comprehensive, full colour guide answering frequently asked questions such as how to find an apprenticeship, whether the training will be accessible and what support will be available.

Our factsheets for disabled students cover various topics including the Equality Act, funding from charitable trusts and postgraduate education.

## Advice and information

Through our various helplines we provide information on benefits, tax credits and direct payments, including individual budgets, funding from social services in relation to care needs and advice on employing personal assistants.

### Disabled Students Helpline

We provide free information and advice for disabled students, covering further and higher education, employment, apprenticeships and volunteering. Our helpline is open Tuesday and Thursday 11.00-13.00.

T 0330 995 0414

E [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Policy and campaigns

Disability Rights UK is a campaigning organisation. This includes working to influence decision-makers on issues of access and support for disabled people taking apprenticeships or studying in further and higher education.

### Membership

Join Disability Rights UK and help us strengthen the voice of disabled people. We are a membership organisation with over 1,300 members, including universities, colleges and individual students.

You can sign up for membership on our website:

W [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/membership/how-join](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/membership/how-join)

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Email: [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)  
[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)



For free information  
and advice for disabled  
students visit the Disability  
Rights UK website.