

Bridging the gap: a guide to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in higher education

Guide for 2004/05



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Important information

The Government has announced its intention to make changes in the 2004/2005 arrangements for students. These will depend on changes to regulations.

As a result, we strongly advise you to check the latest details of the student finance system for 2004/2005 by visiting the DfES 'Student Finance' website (www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport). You can also get up-to-date information from your local education authority (LEA).

1/What is this guide about?

This guide provides information about Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for:

- current and prospective full-time and part-time students in higher education;
- postgraduate students; and
- Open University (OU) and other distance-learning students.

Local education authorities (LEAs) can award DSAs to part-time and full-time undergraduate students and certain postgraduate students who can show that they have a disability, medical condition or specific learning difficulty which affects their ability to study.

LEAs have responsibility for assessing whether you are eligible for DSAs and how much you will receive. The Student Loans Company will then pay DSAs on their behalf. The OU will continue to assess applications for DSAs from their students, although we expect that the SLC will also pay DSAs on the OU's behalf.

This guide explains:

- how to apply;
- what costs DSAs can help with; and
- who can help you with your application.

The guide is intended for students and prospective students whose homes are in England and Wales.

Appendix 1 explains the personal eligibility conditions for receiving DSAs.

Broadly similar arrangements apply if you live in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Contact details for Scotland and Northern Ireland are on page 34 and 35.

This guide is not intended for students who will get an NHS bursary for their course. Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are available as part of the NHS Bursary Scheme, for which NHS bursary degree and diploma students may be eligible. (If you are a medical or dental student who started your course in 2000, you will become eligible for an NHS bursary in September 2004.) If you will receive an NHS bursary, or plan to apply for one,

you should contact your university or college for details of the support that is available to disabled students under the NHS Bursary Scheme. You can get more information about the NHS Bursary Scheme, and the DSAs this offers, in the Department of Health's guide 'Financial Help for Health Care Students' or from the website at www.doh.gov.uk/hcsmain.htm

2/Background

The information here is for guidance only and does not cover all circumstances. If you need more help, speak to your LEA (or the OU), or the disability adviser at your university or college.

Full-time and part-time undergraduates including part-time students studying on distance-learning courses (but not OU students)

You should read this guide together with ***Financial Support for Higher Education Students Guide for 2004/2005***, which provides information on the financial support that is available to students. You can get copies from your LEA or by calling our free order line on 0800 731 9133. You can also download this guide from the Department for Education and Skills website at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/ or from the Student Finance Direct website at www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk

You can get Braille and audio versions of the guide, and this booklet, free of charge by calling our order line.

Postgraduates

- DSAs are available to full-time and part-time postgraduate students as well as distance-learning students.
- Postgraduate part-time courses should last for at least one year and should **not** take more than twice as long to complete than an equivalent full-time course.

Open University students

- DSAs are available to part-time OU students taking undergraduate and postgraduate level courses.
- A part-time course is defined as a course that lasts for at least one year and does not take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course. For OU students, this will usually mean taking undergraduate-level courses that amount to 60 credit points each year.

3/What are the Disabled Students' Allowances for?

The DSAs help pay for extra costs you may have to pay in attending your course, as a direct result of your disability. The allowances can help with the cost of a non-medical personal helper, major items of specialist equipment, travel and other course-related costs.

4/Am I eligible?

Full-time and part-time undergraduate students

You are eligible to apply for DSAs if:

- you attend an eligible full-time **undergraduate** course and you are personally eligible for maintenance support for that course; or
- you undertake (study) an eligible part-time **undergraduate** course, and are personally eligible for part-time support. (A part-time course would have to last for at least one year and must not take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course.)

The personal eligibility conditions for receiving DSAs are explained in **appendix 1** to this guide.

You may be eligible to apply for DSAs if you are attending a part-time course of initial teacher training (ITT). Your LEA will be able to give you more details about this. PGCE courses attract support, including DSAs, as if they were undergraduate courses rather than postgraduate courses.

You are **not** eligible for DSAs if you attend an eligible course and:

- you are an EU student and are eligible only for support with your fees; or
- you are a sandwich-course student on a full-year paid placement.

Postgraduate students

You are eligible to apply for a DSA if you undertake (study) a recognised taught or research **postgraduate** course and meet the personal eligibility conditions which are explained in **appendix 1** to this guide.

All postgraduate courses should last for at least one year and lead to a masters degree, doctorate, postgraduate diploma or certificate, for which the entry requirement is at least a first degree or equivalent. Part-time courses will need to take no longer than twice the time of an equivalent full-time course in order to be eligible.

Some postgraduate students will **not** qualify for a DSA from their LEA. If you are receiving a bursary or award from a research council or the Arts and Humanities Research Board, the NHS, the General Social Care Council, or if your university or college provides support that is equivalent to DSAs, you will not be eligible for a postgraduate DSA from your LEA. You should contact the provider of your bursary or award for advice on any extra support you may be entitled to because of your disability.

Students on PGCE courses will continue to be eligible for the DSAs awarded to undergraduate students and, as a result, will not be eligible for a postgraduate DSA.

After completing an undergraduate course of study, if you then go on immediately to postgraduate study, any amount you received through the DSA for specialist equipment as an undergraduate will be taken into consideration.

Open University students

To be eligible for DSAs, you must be registered for an OU undergraduate or postgraduate level course that lasts for at least one year and does not take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course. This will usually mean that the course amounts to 60 credit points each year.

You must also meet the personal eligibility conditions which are explained in **appendix 1** to this guide.

Students undertaking more than one course

You cannot, at any one time, have DSAs for more than one course.

Previous study

If you are starting your course in 2004/2005, previous study on a course of higher education will not affect your eligibility for DSAs, even if you received financial support for it. If you are already on a course, and have received public financial support for a previous course, you should still be eligible for DSAs. However, if you received any specialist equipment through the DSA for a previous course, this will be taken into consideration. Your LEA (or OU) will be able to give you more advice.

Age

Eligibility for DSAs is not affected by an age limit, and if you are aged 50 or over you may be eligible for them whether you are studying full-time or part-time, even if you are not eligible for a student loan or part-time course grant.

5/Do I have to tell my college or university about my disability?

No, but it will help you with your application if you contact the disability adviser at your university or college. He or she may be able to advise you and give you more information about the help the university or college can provide.

There is more information about the role of the disability adviser on page 11. You will need to give your LEA evidence that you have a disability if you want to apply for DSAs. If you are studying part-time and want to apply for DSAs, you will also need to ask your college to certify that your rate of study is at least 50% of an equivalent full-time course.

If you are an OU student and want to apply for DSAs, you will have to tell them about your disability.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Some students with disabilities do not want to reveal their disability for fear of discrimination. From September 2002, the DDA (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) has made it unlawful for higher education institutions to discriminate against disabled students by treating them less favourably in their admissions policies or the services they provide. Under the Act, institutions must make reasonable adjustments so disabled students are not at a major disadvantage compared to students who are not disabled.

The Disability Rights Commission should be able to answer more detailed enquiries about the Act.

Your LEA will treat any information about your disability as confidential, but if you choose not to tell your university or college about your disability, the necessary reasonable adjustments may not be made. You can tell the university's or college's disability adviser in complete confidence about your disability, to make sure they get you the support you need.

If you are still worried about revealing your disability, you could contact 'Skill', the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, or a disability organisation that specialises in your particular disability. You can find contact details for these organisations and the Disability Rights Commission on pages 33 to 38.

The role of disability advisers

Disability advisers are available at most higher education institutions and play an important role in the DSA process. The role of disability advisers may vary between institutions but, generally, they will:

- help students with their DSA applications;
- offer disabled students advice on other sources of funding and support that may be available;
- arrange DSA assessment on behalf of students;

- advise on the particular needs that may arise from specific courses;
- help put in place the support that is recommended in the DSA assessment report;
- explain and give advice on educational psychologists' reports and the DSA assessment reports;
- co-ordinate the network of support workers;
- work with Accommodation Services, Social Services, LEAs and academic departments;
- make recommendations for the academic department in relation to students, for example, special exam arrangements;
- supervise and arrange training for support workers;
- research, develop and help put into practice institutions' policies for exams, physical access and fieldwork; and
- develop and put into practice disability elements of various institutional strategies.

Without the involvement of a disability adviser, the process of getting DSA support might be more difficult. We recommend that the disability adviser is sent a copy of your DSA assessment report. Your DSA assessor will only send the disability adviser a copy of the report if they have your permission, in writing.

6/How do I show that I am eligible?

Your LEA (or OU) must consider all cases where students face extra costs to attend their course because of their disability. If you have a physical disability, a mental-health difficulty or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, you may qualify.

If your condition has been documented at an earlier stage, your eligibility for DSAs can be easily proved, but a previous assessment of a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, may need to be updated (please see the next section). However, you will need to satisfy your LEA (or OU) that the effects of your condition will mean that you will need to pay extra costs in attending your course. If you are disabled, or have mental-health difficulties, you will need to provide medical proof of your disability, such as a letter from your doctor or specialist.

If you have more than one medical condition, you should provide evidence for all of them.

Specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia)

If you have a specific learning difficulty, your LEA (or OU) will need evidence of this from a suitably qualified person. When students with a specific learning difficulty apply for DSAs, it is recommended that LEAs (or OU) accept any full diagnostic assessment that has been carried out since they were 16. As part of the DSA assessment

process, LEAs (or OU) may ask for an update of a previous diagnostic assessment to see what the likely effect of your specific learning difficulty will have on the skills you need for higher education.

Your LEA (or OU) may ask you to have an independent assessment to establish your disability and eligibility for DSAs. The university or college disability adviser may be able to help you arrange an updated, or new, assessment.

Your LEA (or OU) **cannot** meet the costs of diagnosing your disability for **establishing** your eligibility for DSAs. Ask your LEA (or OU) what evidence of your disability they will need **before** you send in your application. If you need a test to establish your eligibility for DSAs, but cannot afford the fee, you can apply to your university or college for help in meeting the costs through the Access to Learning Fund. The university or college disability adviser may be able to help you with this.

7/How and to whom do I apply?

Full-time undergraduates

If you are entering higher education for the first time in 2004/2005 and are applying to your LEA for financial support, you will find that the application form asks if you have a disability. You can apply on paper using form PN1 (form PR1 if you are a continuing student) or online at www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk

If you are applying using a paper form, please show that you are interested in claiming DSAs by saying that you have a disability and by giving details of the nature of your disability and the date of your last assessment in the notes pages at the back of your form. If you fill in the online application form, provide details in the space provided.

Many LEAs have a named officer who deals with applications for DSAs. You may contact your LEA before you send in your application to find out if there is a named officer who you can send it to and discuss the DSA process with. Your LEA will be able to offer you advice about the DSAs, even if they do not have a named officer dealing with DSA applications. You may be asked to include confirmation of your disability with the PN1 or PR1 application form. If you fill in the online application form, we will always ask you to provide this confirmation afterwards.

Once your LEA has confirmed your eligibility for DSAs, they will then ask you to have a DSA assessment carried out so that the help you need on your course can be identified and arranged. If your application is successful, your LEA will let you know the level of help you can have from DSAs. If you are not sure about your entitlement, discuss it with your LEA.

Part-time undergraduates

If you are a part-time student and want to apply for DSAs, you should ask your LEA to send you the DSA application form for part-time undergraduate students. You can also download this from our website at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport/formsandguides/ or from the Student Finance Direct website at www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk

Postgraduates

If you are a postgraduate student, you should ask your LEA to send you the DSA application form for postgraduate students. You can also download this from our website at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport/formsandguides/ or from the Student Finance Direct website at www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk

Open University students

If you have told the Open University that you have a disability, the OU DSA office will send you all the information you need to apply for a DSA. If you do not want to tell the OU for reasons of confidentiality, ask the OU's DSA office at Walton Hall for an application form. You will need to send your filled-in form, and any necessary or relevant documents, back to the Open University.

8/When do I apply?

Apply as soon as you can before your course starts in order to receive payments promptly. However, you can apply for DSAs at any stage of your course.

9/How will payments be made?

If your application is successful, your LEA (or OU) will tell you the amount of help you can have from the DSA. The SLC will make DSA payments either to you, into your bank account, or directly to the supplier of equipment or services.

We recommend that the SLC pay the supplier of equipment, your university or college, or your non-medical helper, direct. However, you will have to agree to this. Provisional payments may be based on an estimate a reputable supplier can provide. These payments can sometimes be made before you actually start your course, on the clear understanding that if you do not go on the course, you must repay the amounts in full.

Your DSA assessor or LEA may recommend that you use a particular supplier. These suppliers will normally offer an extended warranty to cover the whole of your course and a very thorough after-sales service. We expect that they will be able to:

- supply all or most of the equipment;
- set up any equipment; and
- install all the recommended software.

10/Do DSAs depend on my income?

No, DSAs do not depend on your income or the income of your family.

11/What do the DSAs cover?

DSAs are not paid as a set amount. Your LEA (or OU) will find out what you need and how much it will cost, usually by asking that you have a DSA assessment. You will only get enough money from the DSAs to cover the cost of the equipment or support you need because of your disability. The amount of DSAs you receive will depend on the DSA assessment. If you are a part-time student, you will have to get certification from your higher education institution that your rate of study is at least 50% of a full-time course in order to be eligible, and to work out the rate of the non-medical helpers and general allowances.

However, there is a limit to the amount of help you can get from the DSAs. The rates shown below are the maximum you can get. They are meant to support people with a high level of need, so most people will get less than the maximum.

The rates of allowances for 2004/2005 (2005 for OU students) (which will depend on changes to regulations) are as follows:

For full-time undergraduate students

- Specialist equipment allowance – up to £4,565 for the whole of your course.
- Non-medical helper's allowance – up to £11,550 a year.
- General Disabled Students' Allowance – up to £1,525 a year.
- Reasonable spending on **extra** travel costs (see page 22 for details on travel costs).

For part-time undergraduate students (including distance-learning students) and relevant Open University students

- Specialist equipment allowance – up to £4,565 for the whole of your course.
- Non-medical helper's allowance – **as a percentage** of the full-time rate, according to the workload of a part-time course, up to £8,670 a year. For example, for a student studying:
 - 50% of a full-time course – up to £5,775 a year; or
 - 60% of a full-time course – up to £6,930 a year.
- General Disabled Students' Allowance **as a percentage** of the full-time rate in the same way as the non-medical helper's allowance, to a maximum of £1,140 a year.

- Reasonable spending on **extra** travel costs (see page 22 for details on travel costs).

For full-time and part-time postgraduate students, including relevant Open University students

There is one allowance to meet all costs of up to £5,500 a year for both full-time and part-time postgraduate students. You can use this for specialist equipment, non-medical personal helpers, extra travel costs or other course-related costs. The amount of DSA you receive will depend on the DSA assessment.

Specialist equipment allowance

This allowance is to help you buy any items of equipment you may need. You can also use it to pay for any repair, technical support, insurance or extended warranty costs arising from owning that equipment. **We recommend that you insure your specialist equipment, and you can use your DSAs to pay the extra insurance premiums.** Your LEA (or OU) can also reimburse costs you have to pay to rent, rather than buy, a major item of equipment if this is more economical.

You can apply for the specialist equipment allowance at any time during your course. The DSA assessment report may advise that you get some initial training in using any equipment that is recommended. The cost of this training would come from your non-medical helper's part of the DSAs.

You should note that if you have a service level agreement with the supplier of your equipment, it might not be honoured if a computer you have received fails because you have loaded extra software that has not been recommended in the DSA assessment report.

If you apply for help towards the end of your course, you may still be able to get a new piece of equipment if there is evidence of need, but your LEA (or OU) may ask you to consider if there are more economical alternatives to buying equipment. For example, you could rent or hire equipment from a supplier or borrow it from your university or college. Non-IT options, such as human support, may be more effective when only a few weeks are left.

Non-medical helper's allowance

This allowance may provide for any helpers, such as readers, sign-language interpreters, note-takers and other non-medical assistants you need to benefit fully from your course. DSAs are **not** meant to help with disability-related spending which you would have to pay, whether you were following your course or not. Your local social services department may help you with these personal costs.

If you have dyslexia or another condition which would benefit from extra tutorial support, you could receive funds from your LEA (or OU) under this allowance to pay for extra support for literacy or personal management problems which arise from your dyslexia if this has been recommended in a DSA assessment carried out by a suitably qualified person. Specialist tutors should provide this support. This support may be available through your institution, although you are entitled to arrange to receive it from another provider, if that is more appropriate. You cannot use the allowance to pay for extra tuition in subjects which are part of your course.

General Disabled Students' Allowance

This allowance may be paid towards other disability-related spending. You can use it to buy items such as tapes and Braille paper, or to top up the other two allowances, if necessary.

Travel costs

If you have to pay extra travel costs to attend your university or college because of your disability, your LEA (or OU) may be able to help with them. Any travel costs of this sort will not depend on your income. You will not normally be eligible for help with everyday travel costs which any student would expect to have. Your LEA (or OU) can give you more advice.

12/How can I find out what I will need?

Your LEA will ask you to have a DSA assessment carried out. This is so that your particular needs can be matched with those of your proposed course so that you can get the help that you will need.

The DSA assessment will be carried out by a person with specialist experience at an independent assessment centre, or at your college or university. If you need help with travel costs to the assessment, you should ask your LEA whether they can help as this can be paid from the general DSA.

You should not arrange for a DSA assessment without first confirming with your LEA (or OU) that they agree for you to do so, and that they approve of your choice of assessment centre. The LEA (or OU) will often have their own preferred source (see **appendix 2**).

The fee that assessors charge for carrying out a DSA assessment may be paid from the DSAs. You will receive a report for this to help your LEA (or OU) assess your entitlement. We strongly advise that your university or college, especially if it employs a disability adviser, should be involved in your DSA application and should see the report and its recommendations.

If your university offers to assess your equipment and support needs, make sure that your LEA (or OU) is happy to accept their assessment (see **appendix 2**).

A DSA assessment should identify the types of equipment and other support you will need, how much it will cost and where to get it from. The report should also identify any training you might need to make best use of the equipment recommended. You can also use the report as supporting evidence in establishing special examination arrangements when you are on your course.

If later on in your course your disability becomes more severe, you can apply to have another DSA assessment carried out to identify any extra support you might need.

13/How soon can I have a DSA assessment done?

Once you have established your eligibility for student support generally, for example:

- you have received an eligibility notification from your LEA; and
- you have provided supporting evidence of your disability or specific learning difficulty from an appropriate specialist;

the LEA can arrange for a DSA assessment to be carried out well before the start of term, and even before you have a confirmed place at an institution.

Ask your LEA for more information. You may then need a top-up assessment when you start your course to make sure that the particular needs you have on your course are met. Students who are already on a course can apply at any time.

14/Can I receive equipment before my course begins?

Possibly. Once your LEA (or OU) has established that you are eligible for DSAs, it can pay for items of special equipment recommended in a DSA assessment report shortly before the start of your course so that you may use them from the very beginning of your studies. However, your LEA (or OU) will ask for evidence that you have been accepted on your course before they will consider doing so. If you do not go on the course, you must return any equipment you have received.

15/What happens to the equipment when my course ends?

All equipment bought with DSAs is, and will stay, your property. You may decide to offer the equipment either to your university or college, or to your LEA (or OU), for other students to use, but you do not have to do this.

16/Will I have to repay my DSAs if I leave my course early?

Possibly. Your LEA (or OU) may have to recover some or all of your DSAs if you abandon your course. They should only ask you to return money you have received for support that you have not yet bought or used.

17/What if I transfer to another course and need different equipment?

Once you have received the maximum special equipment allowance from your LEA (or OU), you cannot receive any further special equipment allowance. This means that if you have already received the maximum amount before you transfer courses, you are not eligible for any further allowance for special equipment. You will still be eligible for the other allowances and travel costs on your new course. Remember, you may not yet have been given the maximum equipment allowance or you might be able to top it up from the general allowance on your new course.

18/What if I have to repeat part of my course?

Your LEA (or OU) may be able to continue making payments of your DSAs if you have to repeat periods of study or you need extended study.

19/What do I do if my application is turned down or I am not satisfied?

If your LEA turns down your application for DSA, find out their reasons. If you do not agree with their decision, ask them to review your case.

If you give your LEA all the information they ask for and meet their deadlines, you have a right to expect a prompt and efficient assessment of your claim. If you are happy with the way the LEA has dealt with your application (they have been efficient and polite and so on) but feel that the wrong decision has been reached in your case, ask the LEA to give you information on how to appeal. Your university's or college's disability adviser, Student Services Department or Students' Union may help you with an appeal.

If you are unhappy with the way in which you have been dealt with, ask the LEA to give you details of the authority's system for dealing with complaints.

You will find more detailed information on appeals and complaints in the *Financial Support for Higher Education Students Guide for 2004/2005* booklet.

If you are an Open University student, you should contact the Open University for details of their complaints procedure.

20/What other financial support is available?

Postgraduate students should note that only the sections dealing with the Access to Learning Fund and benefits will be relevant to them.

Full-time undergraduates

Student loans are available to students aged under 50. If you are aged 50 to 54 at the start of your course, you may still be eligible if you can show that you are going to return to employment after leaving your course. If you cannot show this or are aged 55 and over at the start of your course, you will not be eligible for a student loan.

You may be eligible for a grant for tuition fees. There are also grants available for living costs if you have children or adult dependants. There is no age limit for grants for tuition fees and living costs.

If you are starting higher education in 2004/05, you may also qualify for a Higher Education Grant. (The introduction of the grant depends on changes to regulations.) This will be assessed automatically as part of your main application for support.

The *Financial Support for Higher Education Students Guide for 2004/2005* provides more details about the other support that is available.

Part-time undergraduates (including distance-learning students) and Open University students on undergraduate courses

If you are a part-time student on a course in England and Wales that is 50% or more of an equivalent full-time course, you can apply for support. Depending on changes to regulations, this will include a fee grant of up to £575 and a course grant of up to £250 towards travel, books and other course costs.

Whether you are entitled to the grants will depend on your income and that of your husband, wife or partner. If your income is £14,599 or below, you will be entitled to both grants. If you earn between £14,600 and £21,487, you will receive partial support. If you have a partner, we will ignore £2,000 from your combined income. And if you have dependent children, we will ignore £2,000 from your income for the eldest child and £1,000 for each other dependent child. As an example, if you are married with two dependent children, you will qualify for maximum support if the combined income of you and your partner is below £19,600.

Access to Learning Fund

Universities and colleges deal with the administration of the Access to Learning Fund on behalf of the Government. They provide financial help to both full- and part-time students (50% full-time equivalent or more) and those taking 'taster' modules of at least 12 credits (10% of a full-time course) on a low income who may need extra financial support for their course and to stay in higher education.

More specifically, the funds can:

- meet particular costs which are not already being met from other grants;
- help if students are in financial difficulty;
- provide emergency payments for unexpected financial crises; and
- help students who may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems.

You should contact your college student services department to find out if you qualify for help from the Access to Learning Fund. Disabled students **whose disability prevents them from studying 50% of a full-time course** will also be eligible for support from the Access to Learning Fund, as long as they are studying at least 25% of a full-time course.

You may get help in meeting the cost of the diagnostic test for the DSAs, including travel to and from the assessment centre, through the Access to Learning Fund.

Important information about Opportunity Bursaries in England

From 2004/05 Opportunity Bursaries are no longer available to new students. You will be able to receive your second- or third-year instalments if you are a continuing student or in full if you were previously awarded a bursary and this was put off to the beginning of your course. However, you may be eligible for the Higher Education Grant. Your LEA will be able to give you more details.

Benefits

Although most full-time students are not entitled to social security benefits, certain students in vulnerable groups, including lone parents and disabled students, may be eligible for social security benefits. If you want to take a full-time course of higher education, you should ask your benefits or Jobcentre Plus office and local authority how this may affect your entitlement to benefits. You can also contact *Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities* for information on benefits and studying.

If you are eligible for benefits, Jobcentre Plus will take account of any income you receive through grants or loans under the main student support arrangements. **Where you are eligible for a full-time loan, the maximum loan available to you will be taken into account, whether or not you take it out.** If your partner is eligible for benefits, Jobcentre Plus will take account of your student income in the same way when they work out his or her benefits. They do not take account of support towards your tuition fees and help from Disabled Students' Allowances. If you are receiving part-time support, your Benefits Office or Jobcentre Plus will ignore this.

There is a free and confidential Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00 for people with disabilities and their carers. If you use a textphone, dial 0800 24 33 55.

21/Where can I get more information?

Skill: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Chapter House
18-20 Crucifix Lane
London
SE1 3JW

Information Service

(1.30pm to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday)

Phone: 0800 328 5050

Minicom: 0800 068 2422

Fax: 020 7450 0650

E-mail: info@skill.org.uk

Website: www.skill.org.uk

Skill is a useful source of information about DSAs. They have published a booklet 'Disabled Students' Allowances' which gives guidance on the evidence LEAs (or OU) need from applicants. It also contains a useful checklist if you are planning to apply for DSAs. Skill also publishes several booklets and information sheets about DSAs and applying to higher education, which are available from their information service. The information service can answer enquiries on higher education and disability by phone (voice or text), letter, fax or e-mail.

Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

Freepost MID 02164
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 9HY

Phone: 08457 622 633

Fax: 08457 778 878

Textphone: 08457 622 644

E-mail: enquiry@drc-gb.org

Website: www.drc-gb.org

National Union of Students (NUS)

Nelson Mandela House
461 Holloway Road
London
N7 6LJ

Phone: 020 7561 6500

Fax: 020 7263 5713

E-mail: nusuk@nus.org.uk

Website: www.nusonline.co.uk

Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

Gyleview House
3 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh
EH12 9HH

Phone: 0845 111 1711

Fax: 0131 244 5887

E-mail: saas.geu@scotland.gov.uk

Website: www.saas.gov.uk

**Department for Employment and Learning
(Northern Ireland) (DELNI)**

Adelaide House
Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD

Phone: 028 9025 7710

Fax: 028 9025 7747

E-mail: studentsupport@delni.gov.uk

Website: www.delni.gov.uk/studentsupport

Information specific to your disability

Adult Dyslexia Organisation (ADO)

336 Brixton Road
London
SW9 7AA

Phone: 020 7924 9559 (answerphone only)

E-mail: dyslexia.hq@dial.pipex.com

Website: www.futurenet.co.uk/charity/ado

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA)

98 London Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 5AU

Phone: 0118 966 2677 (Administration)
0118 966 8271 (Helpline – Monday to Friday,
10am to 12.45pm and 2pm to 4.45pm)
Fax: 0118 935 1927
E-mail: info@dyslexiahelp-bda.demon.co.uk
Website: www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk

The Dyslexia Institute

Park House
Wick Road
Egham
Surrey
TW20 0HH

Phone: 01784 222300
Fax: 01784 222333
E-mail: info@dyslexia-inst.org.uk
Website: www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street
London
WC1H 9NE

Helpline: 0845 766 9999

Fax: 020 7388 2034

E-mail: E&Einformation@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk/student

RNIB offers support for blind and partially sighted students studying at all mainstream colleges and universities. RNIB can give information and advice on study options and skills, equipment, sources of funding and careers. There is a team of Post-Compulsory Education Officers based across the UK.

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

19-23 Featherstone Street
London
EC1Y 8SL

Phone: 020 7296 8000

Fax: 020 7296 8199

Textphone: 020 7296 8001

Freephone voicephone: 0808 8080123

Freephone textphone: 0808 8089000

E-mail: informationline@rnid.org.uk

Website: www.rnid.org.uk

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions about the information in this guide, you may contact the DfES at:

Student Finance Delivery Division

2F, Area C

Mowden Hall

Staindrop Road

Darlington

DL3 9BG.

Phone: 01325 392822

Website: www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport

22/Appendix 1

Personal eligibility conditions for receiving DSAs

This section tells you about the **residence requirement** you will need to meet to receive DSAs (or student support generally). **Your LEA (or OU) will decide whether you are eligible for DSAs.**

Meeting the **residence requirement** means that you must have been living in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before the start of the academic year in which the course begins. You must be living in England or Wales on the first day of the academic year in which your course starts (**academic years start on 1 September for a course starting in the Autumn term, 1 January for a course starting in the Spring term and 1 April for a course starting in the Summer term**).

On this date, you must also have settled status – which means you must be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act of 1971.

If you are a **part-time undergraduate student** you must also be living in England or Wales on the **first day of any later academic year of your course**. If you are an OU student and live in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, the OU DSA office can give you more advice about your eligibility for DSAs.

If you were away from this country because you or your family were temporarily employed abroad, you may be treated as if your residence in the UK had not been interrupted. You can find more details in our guide 'Student support for those living or working overseas', which is available from our website at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport/formsandguides/

If you are living here mainly to receive full-time education and you would normally have lived elsewhere, you will not usually be treated as having been living in the UK. Members of the regular armed forces serving abroad, and members of their close families, are treated as living in the UK. If you were away from this country during all or part of the three-year period because you or one of your parents were serving abroad as an active member of the regular armed forces (the army, navy or air force), you, or your parent, will be treated as having been temporarily employed overseas during that period. This will not prevent you from being eligible for DSAs.

If you do not meet the rules for residence in the UK, you may still be able to get DSAs. This may apply if either you, your husband or wife, or your parents are:

- UK nationals who have returned from work in another member country of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland and have got a job in the UK, and you have been living in the EEA or Switzerland for the three years before the first day of the first academic year of your course;

- from another EEA country or Switzerland, if you can show that you, your husband or wife, or either of your parents have ‘migrant worker’ status in the UK and you have been living in the EEA or Switzerland for three years before the first day of the first academic year of your course; or
- recognised by the British Government as a refugee.

If you have been granted **Exceptional Leave** to enter or stay in the UK, **Humanitarian Protection** or **Discretionary Leave** by the Home Office you must have lived in the UK for three years. However, the settled status requirement will not apply to you.

If you are an asylum seeker in the UK, you will not normally be eligible for DSAs unless you have been granted ‘settled status’ by the Home Office and meet the residence requirement.

Your LEA (or OU) will decide whether you meet the residence requirement to qualify for DSAs or student support generally.

23/Appendix 2

DSA Quality Assurance Group (QAG)

A Quality Assurance Group (QAG), made up of representatives from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), local education authorities (LEAs), universities and colleges, the Open University, the NHS Grants Unit, SKILL, NUS and DSA assessors, are designing a scheme to assess the quality of the work of those carrying out DSA assessments. QAG has set some measures against which quality is assessed and the principles for operating a continuing scheme for assessing the quality of the work of those people and organisations which carry out DSA assessments.

We expect the assessment centres that register for the scheme to start being inspected after April 2004. This could take two years to complete. The centres will be inspected every two or three years. We will make available on our website details of those assessment centres that satisfy the inspection measures.

We have published a list of assessment centres that have registered that they are ready to take part in the DSA Quality Assurance scheme on our website. This is an interim list of centres which we will update each month, as necessary.

After April 2004, the list will show:

- registered centres, in other words, those waiting for an initial accreditation audit; and
- centres which have been accredited, in other words, those which have satisfied an audit inspection.

In the meantime, we are treating all registered assessment centres as being within the framework. We recommend that LEAs use registered or accredited centres to carry out DSA assessments. You can find more information on progress of the work of QAG, the quality standards for assessment centres and the list of registered centres at the following website.

www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/dsa_.shtml

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You can get more copies of this booklet by calling our free information line on 0800 731 9133 quoting reference S/BTGB/V4. You can also get this booklet in Braille, on audiotape and in Welsh by calling the free information line.

There is a free textphone service available on 0800 328 8988.

The guide is also available on our website at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/formsandguides/ or from the Student Finance Direct website at www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk



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