

# Helping you meet the costs of learning

**Disabled Learners**

**A Short Guide to Funding for 2008-2009**

This information sheet gives an overview of the sources of funding available to disabled students who have extra costs arising from their disability or impairment whilst at college or university.

This leaflet uses the term ‘disabled learners’ to refer to learners with a wide range of impairments, such as sensory or physical impairments, mental health difficulties, dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy, diabetes etc.

The funding you might get depends on different factors such as:

- what course you want to study;
- where you want to study; and
- whether you want to study full-time or part-time.

You must also meet certain residency conditions. If you have not lived outside the UK (apart from being away temporarily or occasionally, such as on holiday or business trips) you are likely to meet the residency conditions. However, if you are not sure about this, contact your college (for Further Education courses) or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) (for Higher Education courses).

### **Full-time & part -time Further Education**

Full-time and part-time learners studying a Further Education course (below HNC/HND level), provided they meet the residency criteria (see above), may be eligible to apply for an Additional Support Needs for Learning Allowance. This is not income assessed and the college you are studying at decides how much you can get.

You can apply for this allowance to meet disability related study or travel costs. For example, you may need additional software for a computer or you may need Braille paper.

It is important to note that some types of study support and equipment will be provided directly by the college without you having to apply for the allowance. If you are not sure what kinds of disability-related costs you might have while at college, speak to your college support staff. They can discuss with you the nature of your course and the kinds of support you have used before, as well as new kinds of support that are available and the different ways in which the college can help you. They may ask you to undertake a formal assessment of your needs to make sure you get all the support that you need.

### **Full-time Higher Education**

Full-time learners studying a first Higher Education course (HNC/HND level and above), provided they meet the residency criteria (see above), may be eligible to apply for the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA).

DSA is not income assessed, and the amount you can get depends on what your needs are. DSA is not intended to pay for:

- disability-related costs that you would have whether you were a student or not, such as assistance to meet your daily living needs;
- study costs that every student might have.

DSA is made up of three parts:

**Large items of equipment allowance** is for items of specialist equipment you need to participate in your course and to benefit fully from it. For example, you may need specialist furniture. The maximum amount available is £5,030 for the whole of your course (not per year).

The allowance can be paid at any time during your studies, as long as the total payments do not go over the maximum.

**Non-medical helpers allowance** is for any course-related personal assistance you need in order to benefit fully from your course. For example, you can apply for the costs of sign language interpreters. DSA does not meet the cost of extra academic tuition or support in the subject you are studying. However, if you need specialist tutorial support that is specifically related to your disability you may be able to claim the costs from your DSA.

As payments are typically for helpers' wages or costs, they are usually made in regular instalments, and can be paid to you, your institution or your helper. How you get your assistance will depend upon the institution you attend and what suits you best. The maximum amount for each year of your course is £20,000.

**Basic allowance** is intended to cover any costs related to disability and study that are not covered by the other specific allowances. It can pay for things like photocopying if you are unable to study for long periods in the library. It can also be used to top up one of the other allowances. The maximum amount of this allowance is £1,680 per year.

You may also be able to get help towards any additional travel costs you have as a result of your disability.

### **Applying for DSA**

You can get an application form for DSA from SAAS.

To apply for DSA you need to provide evidence of your disability to SAAS. This is usually a letter from your GP, a report from an educational psychologist (for example, if you have dyslexia) or a report from another relevant organisation.

The best thing to do is to arrange to meet the Disability Adviser/support staff in your institution. They can discuss with you the nature of your course and the different

kinds of possible support. They can also tell you about the equipment and services they can provide directly, so that you are clear about what you need from DSA. Someone from your university/college needs to sign the DSA form before you send it to SAAS.

You may be asked to have an assessment, which might be done by your institution or by an Access Centre, to identify any needs that can be paid for via the DSA, as well as support that your institution can provide. SAAS will provide you with full information about how to arrange this assessment and will pay for it.

### **Part-time Higher Education**

If you are a distance-learning student or studying part-time equivalent to at least 50% of a full-time course, you may also be able to apply for the DSA.

The maximum amount you can receive for the basic allowance and non-medical personal help elements of DSA is in proportion to a full-time course; e.g. if you study for half a week, the most you can receive is 50% of these allowances. However, the maximum amount for the large items of equipment allowance is the same as for full-time students.

### **Postgraduate funding**

If you are a postgraduate student, you may also be eligible for DSA from SAAS, provided you are not being supported by a Research Council or by the Scottish Social Services Council, who can provide similar support to a DSA. DSA for postgraduate students is available on the same basis as for undergraduate students, although you should check with your university to see if your course is eligible for DSA.

### **Other disability-related support**

If DSA does not meet all your disability-related costs, your institution has responsibilities to make reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (see below); or you could consider applying to charitable trusts for support.

### **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)**

Your institution has a duty under the DDA to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that you are not placed at a disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled students. This is an anticipatory duty, which means that education providers should continually anticipate the general needs of disabled people rather than wait until an individual requests a particular adjustment. This should be the case whether or not you receive funding for your support costs. Support might include:

- changes to the course delivery if you have a visual impairment or you are deaf or hard of hearing
- providing learning materials in alternative formats if you have dyslexia
- full access to the physical environment, such as providing a car parking space and adaptations to buildings if you have mobility difficulties.

For further information about your rights under the DDA, please see the Skill information booklet on the Disability Discrimination Act on the Skill website at <http://www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=10&p=106#rights>

### **Useful publications**

#### **Benefits for Students in Scotland**

Child Poverty Action Group,  
tel: 0141 552 3303  
[www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/studentbenefitsproject](http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/studentbenefitsproject)

#### **Other Learner Support booklets**

For example -

**-Helping you meet the costs of learning: Your guide to funding** available from learndirect scotland (contact details below)

**-Helping you meet the costs of learning: Funding for disabled students**

**-Employing support workers in Higher Education: A guide for students**

available online at

[www.scotland.gov.uk/fundingforlearners](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/fundingforlearners)

#### **Skill Scotland: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities**

Skill produces a range of information booklets, covering disability issues in post-16 education, training and employment.

For example:

- Higher Education/Further Education in Scotland: Guidance for Disabled People
- Applying for Disabled Students' Allowances
- Studying and Claiming Benefits as 'Incapable of Work'

These can be accessed at [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk) in the Information section.

You can contact Skill via:

Information Service Freephone/text: 0800 328 5050 (freephone from landlines only)  
tel: 0131 475 2348

email: [admin@skillscotland.org.uk](mailto:admin@skillscotland.org.uk)

#### **Further information**

##### **Careers Scotland**

web: <http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/home/home.asp>

##### **learndirect scotland**

tel: 0808 100 9000 (freephone)

email: [info@learndirectscotland.com](mailto:info@learndirectscotland.com)

web: [www.learndirectscotland.com](http://www.learndirectscotland.com)

##### **National Union of Students Scotland**

tel: 0131 556 6598

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

web: [www.nusonline.co.uk/scotland](http://www.nusonline.co.uk/scotland)

**Student Awards Agency for Scotland  
(SAAS)**

tel: 0845 111 1711

email: [www.saas.gov.uk/contact.htm](http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact.htm)

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

**Higher Education and Learner Support**

The Scottish Government

Europa Building

450 Argyle Street

Glasgow G2 8LG

email:

[studentsupport@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:studentsupport@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

web:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/fundingforlearners](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/fundingforlearners)