

## FAQs: Assessment & Support

The Needs Assessment Centre at Queen's assists students to apply for the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) by offering advice, guidance and support through the facilitation of individually tailored needs assessments.

The assessments are designed to help students determine the best possible solutions to assist them to overcome study-related difficulties experienced as a result of a disability, long-term condition / impairment, mental health condition or learning difficulty. The recommendations made during the needs assessment may include equipment, software and one-to-one (ie person-to-person) support. Any one-to-one support that is recommended is implemented and managed by the Register of Support Providers at Queen's.

As both the cost of a student's needs assessment and the costs of administering any one-to-one supports are paid for from the DSA grant award, both the Needs Assessment Centre and the Register of Support Providers at Queen's are non-profit making projects independent of core University funding.

### **What is the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)?**

If you are resident in the UK, as a student with a disability or long-term condition, you may be entitled to apply for the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA).

The DSA award aims to 'level the playing field' between disabled students and their non-disabled peers by covering any extra study-related costs incurred through a disability, long-term condition / impairment, mental health condition or learning difficulty. The award, which is not means tested, is made up of four parts:

1. **Non-medical helper allowance** – to cover the costs of one-to-one academic support (eg Note Takers, Dyslexia Tutor, Mental Health Tutor, Campus Assistant, Proof Reader, Library Assistant, Typist etc).
2. **Specialist equipment allowance** – to purchase items required to better support access to learning and teaching (eg assistive technology (AT) software, hardware such as a laptop to support the aforementioned AT, digital voice recorder, ergonomic chair etc).
3. **General allowance** – an annual payment of £150 to cover other disability-related expenses such as additional photocopying and printing costs.
4. **Travel allowance** – to cover the difference between everyday travel costs you would normally have and any additional expenditure incurred as a result of a disability (eg the cost of travel to University by taxi instead of public transport).

**\*Please note that the allowances are administered by relevant funder - recipients do not receive cash sums.**

### **When can I apply for DSA?**

Normally the DSA1 form for the following academic year is released in April. As the process can take time, it is best to apply for DSA **as soon as possible** to ensure that you have the support in place for when you start your course. You can, however, apply for DSA at any stage of your course.

### **How do I apply for DSA?**

Complete a DSA1 form (available at [www.studentfinanceneni.co.uk](http://www.studentfinanceneni.co.uk)) and send this, with up-to-date medical evidence (or an Educational Psychologist's report if you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia) to your Education Authority or equivalent funding body (eg SAAS, SFE, SFW or Research Council).

### **I have downloaded the DSA form but need support completing it - who can I contact?**

Any queries, just contact us at [nac@qub.ac.uk](mailto:nac@qub.ac.uk) and we will be more than happy to help you.

### **I am a Nursing student – how do I apply?**

The DSA award is administered by the BSO (Business Services Organisation) for Nursing students so a DSA1 form is not required. You should instead approach your Disability Officer who will complete an application form on your behalf.

### **I am from the Republic of Ireland – can I apply?**

Whilst students from the ROI are not eligible for the DSA award, you can apply for a very similar award called the Fund for Students with Disabilities. Please contact your Disability Officer to discuss and for further information, see <https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/>.

### **How do I get a needs Assessment?**

Once you have received a letter from your funding body (the Education Authority for most students or BSO for Nurses) confirming that you are eligible for DSA, contact the Needs Assessment Centre at Queen's at [nac@qub.ac.uk](mailto:nac@qub.ac.uk) to book in for an assessment.

### **Does the needs assessment cost me anything?**

There are no costs incurred by you - the cost of the needs assessment is covered through the DSA award.

### **Where will I be assessed?**

Normally assessments are conducted on a face-to-face basis in one of the specialist assessment rooms in Queen's Student Guidance Centre. However, in response to the current Covid19 pandemic, the University has adapted how it delivers its services and supports to students in line with government guidance and Public Health Agency advice. As a result, the Needs Assessment Centre at Queen's is now offering assessments remotely via secure video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Teams meaning you can have your assessment from the comfort of your own home.

### **How long will the assessment take?**

Usually the informal assessments take around an hour or less but if you have more complex needs, they may take up to an hour and a half so it is important to identify a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. During the assessment, the assessor will help you determine the best possible solutions to help you overcome any difficulties you may experience as a result of your condition(s). These might include assistive technologies (AT), ergonomic equipment and/or one-to-one support such as specialist tutoring, campus assistance, note taking etc.

### **How will equipment / software be demonstrated remotely?**

In advance of the assessment and if applicable, your assessor will send you links to video clips of the assistive technology (AT) equipment / software programme(s) they would normally recommend to students with similar condition(s) and academic support needs. Please ensure that you take time to go through these in advance of the assessment and consider them in relation to your course requirements and support needs. Alternatively, if you would prefer to explore AT recommendations during the assessment, your assessor can do this 'live' on the call by providing links, talking through the software demonstrations and making use of screen sharing facilities.

### **What one-to-one support is available?**

A wide range of one-to-one support is available including Dyslexia/Maths/Mental Health/Autistic Spectrum Tutors, Note Takers, Library Assistants, Campus Assistants, Proof Readers, Typists etc, the majority of which may still be provided remotely as required and / or face-to-face in line with the current 'new norms' of social distancing, mask-wearing etc. For further details, please see the 'Students' Guide to One-to-One Support' at: [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/ProspectiveCurrentStudents/CurrentStudents/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/ProspectiveCurrentStudents/CurrentStudents/).

### **What if I think I may need a face-to-face assessment?**

As far as possible, most assessments will be conducted on a remote basis. However, if you have complex support needs or are extremely anxious about having a remote assessment, it may be possible to arrange for a face-to-face assessment at the Needs Assessment Centre in the Student Guidance Centre. Please contact the Needs Assessment Centre at [nac@qub.ac.uk](mailto:nac@qub.ac.uk) to discuss.

### **What happens next?**

Your needs assessor will write a detailed report outlining the impact of your condition(s) on your studies with recommendations for support. This will be forwarded to you to review and when finalised, will be sent to your funder for approval. **Please note that it is your funder and not the University that makes the final decision in relation to what support will be funded through the DSA award.** Your funder will then write to you to confirm what support has been approved for you. The letter will also detail how you should go about ordering your equipment and arranging for delivery / training if applicable.

### **How long will the process take?**

Typically, the process can take up to three or four months overall. You will receive your confirmation letter outlining which recommendations have been approved within 6 – 8 weeks but this may take longer during busy periods such as at the beginning of the academic year. It can then take a further 4 – 6 weeks to order / receive your equipment and recommended training. Because it can be a protracted process, we would encourage you to **apply as soon as possible** so your support and/or equipment is in place for the start of the academic year. And remember, as soon as your support is approved, start keeping receipts for consumables such as photocopying and printing as these will be reimbursed by your funding body but only if you have a suitable receipt and only if you send these on to your funding body at the end of the academic year with the requisite proforma.

### **What stage is my application at?**

If you have any questions about the progress of your application, email your local DSA Office for an update:

[dsa.officer-armagh@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa.officer-armagh@eani.org.uk)

[dsa.officer-ballymena@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa.officer-ballymena@eani.org.uk)

[dsa.officer-belfast@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa.officer-belfast@eani.org.uk)

[dsa.officer- Dundonald@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa.officer- Dundonald@eani.org.uk)

[dsa.officer-omagh@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa.officer-omagh@eani.org.uk)

[dsa-pt-pg@eani.org.uk](mailto:dsa-pt-pg@eani.org.uk)

### **Further funding information / guidance:**

**SFNI (Student Finance NI):** [www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/types-of-finance/undergraduate/full-time/northern-ireland-student/extra-help/disabled-students-allowances/applying/](http://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/types-of-finance/undergraduate/full-time/northern-ireland-student/extra-help/disabled-students-allowances/applying/)

**Student Finance England (SFE):** [www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/products/full-time-undergraduate-education/full-time-disabled-students-allowances/application-and-supporting-forms/](http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/products/full-time-undergraduate-education/full-time-disabled-students-allowances/application-and-supporting-forms/)

**Student Finance Wales (SFW):** [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/disabled-students-allowances.aspx](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/disabled-students-allowances.aspx)

**Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS):** [www.saas.gov.uk/forms/dsa](http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/dsa)

**Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD):** <https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/>

**Research Councils:** [www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/](http://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/)