

# Into **Higher Education** 2013

The higher education guide  
for disabled people



**Disability Rights UK**



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# Into Higher Education 2013

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Barclays has a long history of driving initiatives that make a real difference to people's lives and is delighted to support this guide. Our longstanding partnership with a wide range of disability charities is a part of our commitment to foster an environment that enables employees to excel and promotes outstanding client service. We wish the students using this guide great success in both their academic and career plans.

Supported by



Thomas L Kalaris  
Chief Executive  
Barclays Wealth & Investment Management

# Preface

## IN THIS GUIDE

Into Higher Education is a guide for disabled people thinking about studying in higher education from September 2013. It deals with common questions such as whether the college or university will be accessible, how to choose a course and what support will be available.

Crucially this edition also covers the new student finance system and has up-to-date information on tuition fees, repayment methods and the support that will be in place for 2013 entry.

In the six case studies, disabled students write about their own experiences and the challenges they have faced, providing a valuable insight into what it is like being a disabled student in higher education.

The guide also contains a useful resources section listing further websites, publications and organisations which can help.

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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# 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 diploma. 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 the costs, especially the widely publicised increase in tuition fees since September 2012.

By going into higher education you can also making a calculated investment in your employability. Graduate starting salaries can range from £18,000-£26,000 or higher. On average a graduate earns almost 50% more over their working lifetime than a non-graduate.

For disabled people especially, having a higher education qualification means a much lower risk of unemployment. Despite progress in society, disabled people with lower qualifications are underrepresented in the workplace. However 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 medicine, nursing, law and teaching, you need to study a particular vocational degree. All of these professions can be made accessible to disabled people.



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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 on higher education courses 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 yourself, 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. You can also ask them about support for extra disability-related study costs from Disabled Students' Allowances, see Section 9.

In England, schools have a duty to provide access to independent and impartial careers advice for 14-16 year olds. Face-to-face guidance is generally quite limited, with schools only providing online, email and phone support.

However the Statutory Guidance for Schools makes clear that they must provide face-to-face careers guidance for all young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability, regardless of whether they have a Statement of Educational Needs (SEN) or not.

Local authorities should provide careers advice up until the age of 25 if you have a Section 139A Learning Difficulty Assessment.

Alternatively you can use the new National Careers Service. If you're aged 13-19 you can call for advice or email through their website. Adults aged 20 and over can also get face-to-face guidance. Call 0800 100 900 to make an appointment with an adviser at your nearest National Careers Service Centre. If you have a disability, learning difficulty or health condition, you should be able to get at least three sessions of face-to-face advice.

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

# Fees and funding

## ENGLAND

You've probably already heard that students who started a higher education course from 2012 are charged more for tuition fees. Tuition fees are the amount universities or colleges charge you each year to study.

Institutions in England are allowed to charge up to £9,000 per year for full-time undergraduate courses. The average tuition fee for new students in 2013/14 will be £8,507.

Part of the reason for the increase was to make up for government cuts to institutions' teaching budgets; universities and colleges themselves don't necessarily end up with more money than before. There has also been a change of funding policy with much of the cost of university courses switching from the taxpayer to the student.

The policy changes 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 a number of support measures in place which may lessen the cost and, in any case, you don't need to pay any cash up front. Even more importantly, the repayment system has changed. Many students will never reach the point of having to pay back the full amount they've borrowed. 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.

As well as our own information in this section, we recommend the newly revised Student Loan Company (SLC) guides for 2013 entry. SLC materials are hosted on the Direct Gov website at [directgov/studentfinance](http://directgov/studentfinance).

## Loans for tuition fees

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



## Loans for living costs

You can also apply for a loan for help with living costs if you're a full-time student and under 60 years of age. When Student Finance England, has decided what support you're entitled to, you need to tell them how much you want to borrow. The amount you can borrow varies according to your household income and where you live and study. New students not living with their parents can get a maximum loan of £7,675 if studying in London and £5,500 if studying outside London. For students living at home with their parents the maximum loan available is £4,375.

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 £21,000 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.

### Repayments

You start repaying your loan in the April following graduation and/or when you're earning over £21,000 per year. Above this level you pay nine per cent of your income. For example, if your salary is £25,000, you will pay nine per cent of £4,000 (£30 per month) taken through the income tax system.

Under the new system, graduates will have more income left after tax and loan repayments. This will make saving for a deposit and repaying a mortgage easier in the years immediately after graduation.

The downside is that it will take you much longer to pay off your loan than previous generations of students. This is compounded by 'above-inflation' interest rates which gradually increase when you earn over £21,000.

### Living cost grants

Full-time students from lower-income households may be eligible for non-repayable living cost or maintenance grants. How much you can receive depends on your income and that of your household. In England, the maximum grant available is £3,354.

### Special Support Grants

Some disabled students can apply for the Special Support Grant. You need to already receive, or be eligible for, means-tested benefits, such as income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Housing Benefit. This will be the case if you receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment.

The amount you can get depends on your income and that of your household. The maximum grant available is £3,354 per year. Students receiving the Special Support Grant are not entitled to other living cost grants. However, the advantage of this grant is that it doesn't count as income and therefore doesn't affect means-tested benefits.

### Access agreements – financial support from institutions

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 the government's access watchdog, the Office for Fair Access. Each university offers its own individual scheme, but they generally include means-tested bursaries and scholarships as well as spending money on increasing access and outreach work.

### National Scholarship Programme

If your family income is less than £25,000 per year, you may get help through the new National Scholarship Programme (NSP). Universities and colleges can decide for themselves what scholarships to offer. Some may choose to particularly support disabled students, so it's best to check with each one you're interested in. NSP funding can be worth £3,000 or more, made up of partial fee-waivers (a reduction in your tuition fees), a free foundation year, cash of up to £1,000 and accommodation bursaries.

## WALES

Universities and colleges in Wales can charge up to £9,000 per year for their courses. However, if you're from Wales you can get a tuition fee loan of up to £3,465 to cover the initial cost and a grant to cover the rest of the fees. The grant does not have to be re-paid.

Full-time students from lower-income households may also be eligible for an Assembly Learning Grant of up to £5,000.

Living cost loans of up to £4,745 are available if you live away from home. The maximum available amount reduces to £3,673 if you live with your parents or increases to £6,648 if you study in London.

## SCOTLAND

If you live in Scotland, as long as you meet the residency conditions, you will not be charged tuition fees on your first degree course. However, Scottish universities can charge up to £9,000 per year to students from elsewhere in the UK.

Most full-time students can apply for student loans to cover 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 £3,465. This fee does not need to be paid up front. Universities in Northern Ireland can charge up to £9,000 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

You should contact the following awarding authorities to apply for student support. See the Resources section for contact details.

- **If you currently live in England:**  
Contact Student Finance England. You should aim to complete your student finance application before June 2013 to be sure you have all your money when you start your course.
- **If you currently live in Wales:**  
Contact Student Finance Wales.
- **If you currently live in Scotland:**  
Contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).
- **If you currently live in Northern Ireland:**  
Contact your local Education and Library Board (ELB) or apply online through Student Finance Northern Ireland.



## Carissa Rickeard BA (Hons) Physical Theatre – East 15 Acting School



**I have struggled throughout my education with severe dyslexia and mild dyspraxia, which was only diagnosed when I was a teenager.**

I have always enjoyed the Arts and attended dance and singing lessons from a young age. When I discovered the art of Physical Theatre I knew it was the right path for me. I auditioned at East 15 Acting School as it is a prestigious drama school that had developed an excellent Physical Theatre course. When I received my place I was very excited about the opportunity and this helped me to proceed as my previous struggles had really affected my confidence.

Initially I was worried about how I would cope at uni, as I never thought I had the intelligence or ability to achieve this. I had always felt as though I was treated negatively by previous teachers and students due to my dyslexia. Thankfully there is help available to higher education students. I found a marvellous dyslexia tutor via the British Dyslexia Association who was local to the university. She also worked evenings and weekend, so I didn't have to miss rehearsals or lectures. This support was funded by Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs).

My tutor's support has greatly helped me through my time so far on the course and I have learnt so many new study skills to support my learning.

“If you are thinking of going to university I wish you the best of luck. If you stay positive and determined you will do well”

I also applied for DSAs towards equipment. Based on my needs assessment I received a computer, talking dictionary and speech dictation software. These have helped me greatly and I now feel I have more control over my learning which has increased my confidence and independence. Without DSAs I wouldn't have been able to receive this help and this would have made my higher education almost impossible.

Some of the most challenging aspects I have found are learning lines, writing critical theatre reviews, the book reviews of theatrical practitioners and stage direction. It has been a hard journey but I have gained so much more than just learning about the physical theatre, I have learnt about myself too. With the amount of hard work I have put in and the amazing support my study support teacher has dedicated to me, I have improved immensely and I am receiving high grades. This has really helped my confidence but I still strive all the time to do better. I can now deal with the continual push through challenging and emotionally frustrating times.

The advice I would give to others wanting to apply to uni would be to not let your disability get in the way. There are people there to help you. Before starting I would contact the disability department at your chosen university to ensure they are able to support with all aspects of your courses.

# Flexible study options

If you don't want to study a three year full-time course there are lots of flexible options. Many courses, including foundation degrees, can be taken part-time. In fact part-time students make up over 40% of all undergraduates. Modular courses allow students to work at their own pace, stopping for a while if necessary or switching to part-time. Distance learning is another option.

## PART-TIME STUDY

You may not want to study full-time. This might be due to your impairment, because you've got a career you don't want to give up, or because you've got a family to support. Some students simply prefer the flexibility that part-time study allows.

Part-time courses don't usually make a difference to any welfare benefits you receive such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), whereas full-time study usually affects your eligibility.

There are other things to consider, such as making sure you can balance studying with your other commitments. For example, it can sometimes be difficult to understand new concepts and produce good essays when you have pressure at work.

## Loans for tuition fees

Fees for part-time courses increased in 2012. Universities and colleges can charge up to £4,500 per year and some charge £6,750 and offer money back through bursaries.

The good news is that part-time students don't now 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 exactly the same basis as full-time students.

New part-time students don't have to start repaying their loans until April 2018, over four years after starting their course. Some part-time students will need to start repaying before they graduate but this would only happen if you're earning over £21,000.



There is a useful repayments guide and video for part-time students on the Independent Taskforce on Student Finance Information website at [www.studentfinance2012.com/resources](http://www.studentfinance2012.com/resources).

Part-time students aren't eligible for living cost loans or grants but you can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) towards extra disability-related study costs. See Section 9.

## Corinna Murray LLB (Hons) Law, Open University



**I was doing voluntary work when someone first suggested I might be interested in studying. I looked at the Open University prospectus and instantly saw lots of science modules I was interested in.**

I'll never forget the day my first course materials arrived. It was amazing – a huge box, not just full of books but, microscopes, lab equipment, and videos. I couldn't wait to start.

Shortly after I began my first course, my health deteriorated further. This has continued over the years and has affected my ability to study. The OU has been brilliant and has worked hard to make things accessible. I feel strongly that in recent years many traditional universities have been forced by legislation to provide services for disabled students whilst the OU was doing it by choice, at least a decade before.

“Your university can only find solutions if they know you're having a problem.”

It feels great to be able to succeed at something. As a wheelchair user, people have often assumed that I'm incapable and it's great to be able to prove them wrong. I've also found that having a routine around my studies has had a positive impact on my physical and emotional health – so much so that, after completing my first BSc (Hons) degree, I decided to carry on studying for an LLB in English Law.

The OU has continuously adapted the amount and type of support. If I'm ill they can arrange for me to submit assessments late, have additional sessions with a tutor, get books in alternative formats and take exams at home. They cover any extra costs involved. I also receive Disabled Students' Allowances. These pay for a laptop and voice-recognition software so I can study in bed and a personal helper who organises my course materials and types up notes.

If anyone else is thinking about studying I would say; think seriously about what it will involve and get help to identify any potential difficulties beforehand, rather than trying to rush things through later. Your university can only find solutions if they know you're having a problem.

## 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 is the largest open learning institution in the UK. It has over 13,000 disabled students and offers more than 250 undergraduate and postgraduate courses and professional qualifications. For a typical Open University student, studying half of the full-time equivalent, the fees will be £2,500 per year in 2013.

The OU offers a low-cost entry route called Access to Success to students from England. Only those without a previous higher education qualification are eligible and your annual household income must be less than £25,000.

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 are taught by further education colleges and higher education institutions. 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.



## Julian Hayes BA (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy, Havering College



**I left school without any qualifications and worked as a builder. I never knew anyone who had been to college, let alone university. At the age of 30 I was diagnosed with cancer and I had to re-evaluate my life.**

I couldn't carry on in the building trade as the work was too physically demanding and I needed to find an alternative to support myself and my family. I went to night school to do basic English and Maths and began working in mental health as a complementary therapist. Eventually at the age of 43 I started my degree as I wanted to gain a greater understanding of how to be useful and more effective with the people I was working with.

I was only diagnosed with dyslexia when I was 38 when I returned to college. When I was told, my first reaction was to cry as I remembered as a child how I would sit in class and not know what to do. Knowing the reason I struggled made me realise that I might actually have the chance to succeed in education – there was hope from the initial feelings of despair.

When I went for my Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) needs assessment it was suggested I have one-to-one support locally. DSAs cover the cost of a dyslexia specialist who comes to my home once a week in the

evenings. I was also given a computer with software to help me deal with my assignments and training to use the equipment.

This help I was given highlighted the fact I had missed out on support as a child. Although I had never viewed myself as having a disability, it amazed me that I suddenly felt valued and included in society. I realised I wasn't thick, just dyslexic!

“Don't be too proud to ask for help or be put off if you don't get the right support straight away.”

For me the worst part has been the sheer volume of work, it's like trying to run a race with concrete boots on. The frustration has been incredible and draining to say the least. I see people float past me and I feel I am always struggling to keep up. I deal with this by looking after myself, being organised, planning, and preparing to the extreme. The DSAs support keeps me on track and when I'm low there's someone to give me moral support. My determination as a dyslexic person is the driving force which has made me overcome adversity.

When I got a referral for not passing a piece of work, it felt like a major set-back. However my lecturer explained that I had just overlooked some details and that it was quite common for students get referred at some point. By putting it into perspective I can see how far I have developed and how much I have achieved.

Don't be too proud to ask for help or be put off if you don't get the right support straight away. Just find someone who can help you find the solutions – and remember to be kind to yourself too!

# Choosing where to study

There are around 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 often finds that choosing the wrong course was an important factor. It's important 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 and 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.

Many of the following are things all students need to think about, but some are specific to disabled students.

## 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?

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.

- 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.

## SECTION 4: CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY

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.

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



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 institution's disability officer.

Your additional support needs should also be considered when you have your Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) assessment. See Section 9 for more details. Any placement that is an integral part of a higher education course will be covered by the Equality Act. Placement providers must ensure that disabled students are not treated less favourably and that reasonable adjustments are put in place.

### COST

With the funding changes since 2012, 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 £9,000. However institutions which are charging more than £6,000, have to put in place measures to support students from poorer backgrounds.

You should also check what universities and colleges in England are offering through the National Scholarship Programme (NSP). NSP funding can be worth £3,000 or more, made up of fee-waivers, a free foundation year, cash of up to £1,000 and accommodation bursaries. For 2013 entry some universities will also offer special financial incentives to students with A level grades of ABB or better.

### FREE 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's 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.

## ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

To help you decide where to study, there are a number of academic factors you might want 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 institution likely to influence future employers?

Research since the 2012 funding changes shows that new students are looking more closely at the perceived 'return on investment' to be gained by studying a particular course.

Unistats is the official website for comparing universities and colleges. The data shows students' entry qualifications, progression through the course, 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. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) also carries out external reviews of universities and colleges and publishes these reports on its website.

## 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 institutions 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 institution'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.

### 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 officer 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 institutions 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 might want to read though the institution's access agreement published on the Office for Fair Access website. You could even ask for information in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty and ask the college or university what action it is taking on equality, especially in relation to the delivery of services for students.

The very best way to find out what a university or college is like is to visit it before you apply. This is discussed in Section 6.



# 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, health and well being centres, counselling, careers and employment advice and disabled student services.

In most larger institutions, 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. This means making sure the reasonable adjustments you need are in place. Every year more disabled people 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 (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 officer.

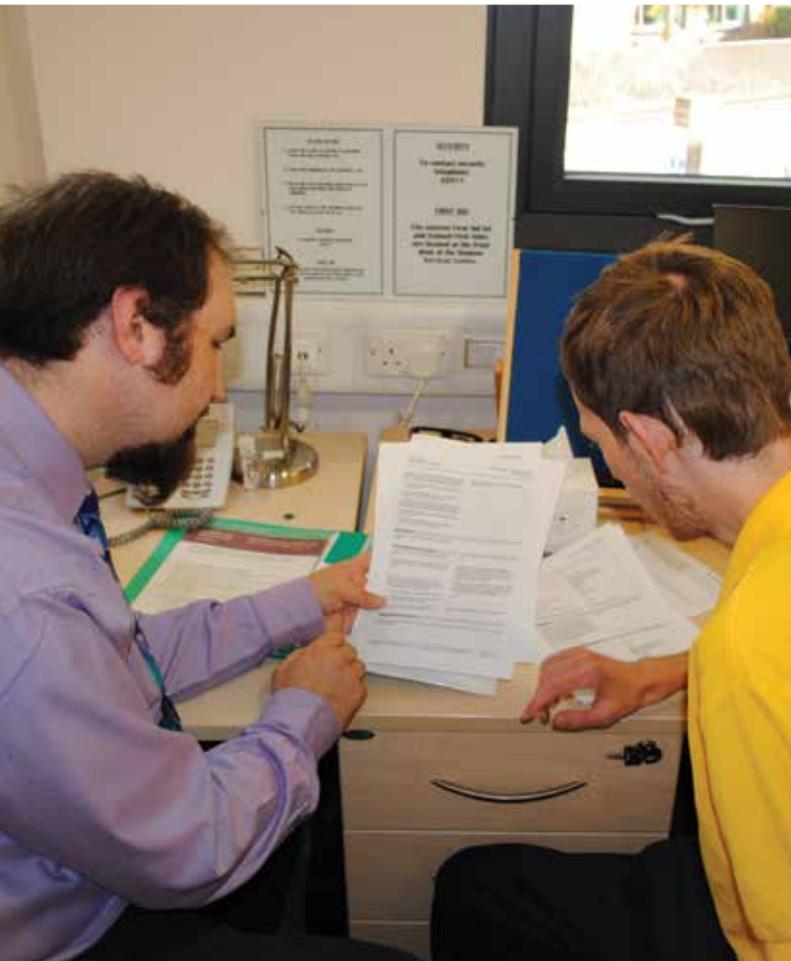
Disability officers are trained professionals and they have lots of experience working with students with all kinds of impairments. They may have information about types of support and ways of studying that you might not have thought of before.

Common examples of disability-related support that students find useful are:

- **Technology** – specialist software such as mind mapping and voice recognition software, training in how to use it and a computer with specialised accessories to match your needs;
- **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 and accessible study materials, extra time in exams or other assessments; support with field work or work experience arrangements.

### 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 officer whilst you're finalising your choices. On Open Days you can usually arrange to meet with a disability officer if you contact them in advance.



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

Disability services will be told if you've declared your disability as part of your UCAS application. They should contact you before you arrive, but at that stage they won't know anything more about you. They will invite you to discuss any disability support you might need. If you choose not to declare through UCAS, they won't know you have a disability. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.

On the Disabled Students' Allowances application form, there's a section which asks about your 'Consent to share DSA 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.

### Help with academic studies

After you start your course, you should always talk to tutors about your progress and any problems you are having with the course.

Most student services can provide study support to help you manage your coursework or organise exam revision. However sometimes students experience study difficulties connected with their disability. If this happens to you, disability services are there to help. For example, you might find that the agreed teaching arrangements are being neglected or your support package is no longer appropriate and you want to change it.

### Don't go it alone

Student services and disability services can give you information on a wide range of topics. They are there to help and support all students to get the most out of their courses and to advise on any personal issues or worries that may arise.

You can also get information and advice from the National Union of Students or the Students' Union, Association or Guild of Students on campus.

# 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 will have 'open days' when you can look around their facilities, meet course tutors and ask questions. You can find dates on their websites and Facebook profiles 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 conventions where you can meet staff from several institutions 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.

If you have very specific needs, you should visit all the institutions you're interested in. It's better not to waste one of your UCAS choices by finding out an institution 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 disabled students.

The disability officer 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 institution.

You may also be able to meet accommodation staff and try out the facilities in halls.

## DISCUSSING ISSUES

Tutors can discuss different course options with you and how many assignments, lectures and seminars you'll have. Speak with them about how your individual needs can be met. Ask what kinds of adjustments the university or college will make so you can access the course. If you need flexible exam arrangements, talk about these as well.

The disability officer should be able to tell you about the institution's services for disabled students, including accommodation and support arrangements. If the institution agrees to adapt buildings and/or elements of 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.

Disabled students already at the institution can tell you from first-hand experience what they think about the support arrangements. Students who are already on the course will be able to tell you about the level of work expected and any difficulties they've had.

## ASSISTANCE DURING YOUR VISIT

Let the institution know in advance if you need assistance on the day of your visit. The disability officer 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?
- If the institution is campus-based, are all key 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?

### Other support facilities

- What other support is available?
- Is there a university health service or do I register with local GPs?
- How accessible are other student services such as counselling?
- Can someone help with my claim for Disabled Students' Allowances?
- With some disabilities, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, you may need to ask if there is a room where you can rest.

You may find it helpful to photocopy this checklist of disability-related questions and take along with you.



# 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 UCAS Apply. If you're currently studying, you can apply to UCAS through your school or college. They will give you a 'buzzword' to access the system. 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, you could 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 your personal 10-digit ID number.

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 institution(s). If you are 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 £12 if you apply for one course at one institution. For two or more choices the cost is £23.

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 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 deadline is 15 October 2012. Some Art and Design courses have a later deadline of 24 March.



## 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 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 should include details of outside interests, such as hobbies, work experience or positions of responsibility.



A good personal statement is particularly important if you don't meet the usual academic requirements. 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 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. References are not accepted from family members. You might want to discuss with your referee whether or not you are happy for them to mention your impairment.

The advantages of telling colleges and universities 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, institutions 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.

UCAS produces a guide for mature students called *The Lifelong Learning Guide* and the Student Room website includes video case studies of current and past mature students and discussion areas to share experiences.

### HOW DO INSTITUTIONS 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 solely on grades rather than points. Conditional offers will be confirmed when your exam results are known.

UCAS will send you each institution's offer as soon as it is made. You will 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

The chances are you will not have an interview, unless you are applying for a health or education course or to a selective university such as Oxford or Cambridge. If you are invited for an interview, here are some basic points to think about:

- Read the prospectus so you can talk about the course and the institution
- Read through a copy of your application form – interviewers may ask you questions about the information you provided
- Be on time
- Look presentable
- Be polite, honest and positive

To get to the institution or fully access the interview 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 to make the course accessible. Staff may need to adapt their teaching materials or methods to suit you. 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 institution to help you succeed.

Discussions about your disability in the interview are not part of the admissions process. Your application should only be judged on your academic ability and experience. Ideally, you will have already discussed this with the disability officer.



## 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 institutions have introduced admissions tests for their most popular subjects. These tests are designed to measure your ability to study at higher education level. 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 institution's disability officer.

### IF YOUR APPLICATION IS UNSUCCESSFUL

Universities and colleges don't usually give detailed feedback when rejecting applications. Institutions cannot reject you because of your 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 institution 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 institution 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 will be eligible for Extra. This scheme operates from 24 February and allows you to apply for other courses with vacancies. You can apply for courses through Extra on the UCAS website.

### Clearing

If you don't have a place by the end of June, there will still be lots of options through the UCAS Clearing system. From July to September, higher education institutions advertise their remaining course vacancies and you can then apply to them directly. The official lists are published on the UCAS website and in national newspapers. Around 10% of students find their places through Clearing. 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. 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

If you are determined to take a particular course, retaking examinations may allow you to reapply next year. Better grades may be expected for retakes. Think about alternative courses or a career path that does not involve higher education. Discuss your options with a careers adviser.

# Telling people about your disability

You might be unsure whether to tell the university or college about your disability or wondering about the best time to do this.

Colleges and universities sometimes describe the process of telling them about your disability as 'disclosure'. If you choose to disclose your impairment, it's important to think about what you expect the outcome to be and who you might tell.

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 tell them 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 officer 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, here is some information worth considering:

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Universities and colleges have been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act since 2005 (earlier in Northern Ireland). This means they have well developed systems and procedures for admitting disabled students and making sure they progress in their studies. See Section 5 on Disability Services for more details. It would be unlawful for them to refuse you a place or treat you less favourably because of your disability.

This may be the first time you've had to think about telling others about your disability, but 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 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.

## SECTION 8: TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR DISABILITY

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 officer 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

Recent research shows that disabled students who receive Disabled Students' Allowances 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 officer, 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 is 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. You would need to ask for this well in advance to give the university time to make arrangements. Some vocational courses, for example teacher training, require you to provide health information to complete registration for a professional body.

### 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

Although you may have some ideas about the support you will need, you might also be wondering how to pay for it.

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) can cover the extra study-related costs that students have because of their impairment. DSAs are not loans and the amount you can receive doesn't depend on your income.

There are four allowances:

- **Specialist equipment allowance** for computers, digital recorders and other equipment. It can also pay for training on how to use equipment, help in setting it up and insurance. The maximum amount is £5,161, the same for full-time and part-time students, for the whole course;
- **Non-medical helper's allowance** towards notetakers, sign language interpreters, readers and other non-medical helpers. The maximum amount is £20,520 per year (pro-rata for part-time students up to a maximum of £15,390);
- **General allowance** for extra books, photocopying, or can be used to top up the specialist equipment and non-medical helper's allowances. The maximum amount is £1,724 (pro-rata for part-time students up to a maximum of £1,293);
- **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 when most other students use 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 SAAS.

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 it is a designated course and they are studying at least 25% of the full-time equivalent. 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 £10,260. International students are not eligible for DSAs. Postgraduate EU students are eligible if they have a Research Council Award.

### APPLYING FOR DSAs

- In England apply to Student Finance England. You can apply at the same time as making your online UCAS application. For NHS-funded courses, you need to apply to NHS Student Bursaries for your DSAs.
- In Wales apply to Student Finance Wales, or NHS Wales Student Awards Unit for NHS funded courses.
- In Scotland apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for any course.
- In Northern Ireland apply to your local Education and Library Board (ELB). For NHS-funded courses contact the Bursary Administration Unit.



Once you have decided to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances, there are several steps before you receive your equipment and support. At certain points you will need to take an active role in the process. This will be explained to you in letters from your Student Finance company. It's a good idea to apply early in the year so that you have time to respond to the letters and emails before the summer holidays.

If you have ticked the Disabled Students' Allowances box on your student loan application, you will receive a DSA1 application form with your basic details already filled in.

Otherwise you can download the form from the websites above. You will need to complete the form and send any additional information asked for. This will include evidence of your impairment. If you have a health condition, this might be a letter from your doctor or consultant. 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 by a chartered psychologist or specialist teacher holding a current Assessment Practising Certificate..

Once you have sent the form and evidence of your disability, Student Finance will write and/or email you to confirm that you are eligible for DSAs. If you have ticked the 'consent to share' box, a copy will be sent to Disability Services at your first choice university or college.

### Needs assessment

The letter from Student Finance will tell you about the next step – which is to have a needs assessment. Many students worry about what this involves, especially if they had an assessment at school or through the health service where their voice wasn't listened to or which only focused on what they couldn't do. However, the needs assessment for DSAs is not like this at all. Its purpose is to make sure you have the best possible opportunity in higher education to show your abilities, make good progress and achieve your goals.

The needs assessor will sit down with you, discuss your course and identify areas where you might benefit from using, for example, computer technology or someone to help you take notes. 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 and send it to Student Finance, and they'll send you a copy as well if you wish.

### Making an appointment

There are access 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 an access centre that is either near home or their preferred university – it's your choice where to go.

All access centres have to meet quality standards and the organisation that sets and checks these standards is called DSA-QAG. Student Finance will direct you to the DSA-QAG website where you can find an up to date list of access centres. Click on 'Search for Assessment/Outreach Centres' and then search your preferred location to see the centres listed.

You will need to phone or email the 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. Nothing will happen until you take this step.

### 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 officer at your first choice university to organise personal support such as one-to-one dyslexia support or a notetaker.

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.



## Jake Potts Foundation Degree Interactive Media and Games Devt – NE Worcestershire College



**I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome from a young age. This has allowed me to have support throughout my educational life and helped me overcome a lot of issues that had been present in the past.**

I progressed to my Foundation Degree following a BTEC National Diploma course in Interactive Media at the same college. I stayed at the Bromsgrove campus because the surroundings were familiar and everything was already established there in my life. I'm glad that I didn't make such a huge change at that point.

Being a disabled student at college has never really stood out as my sole characteristic. Perhaps it is noticeable to some people, maybe even many, but it never really got in the way of anything.

Tutors and support workers were always fantastic at what they did. They were supportive and understanding, as well as great people to get along with. If I ever needed assistance, they were always there for me. I regularly used my support workers who would come into my lessons to make sure I was on task and that my work was going smoothly.

The support I received was funded through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). Applying for DSAs with honest answers about my condition and the help I needed meant they could judge what assistance was necessary at college and at home without anything being redundant.

I had a lot of positive experiences during my time at Bromsgrove, so picking an all-time best experience is difficult. All I will say is that it was fantastic to be in an environment with an awesome atmosphere and friendly people who were some of the greatest individuals I have ever known. This enabled me to express myself without having to feel alienated.

“Enjoy yourself, your time and other people at your college or university as much as possible and never be afraid to ask for anything”

A notable difficult experience was during my final year when things temporarily got hectic. I had three assignments to hand in for mid-January. After much stress over the Christmas holidays and New Year, I wasn't sure if I would be able to finish all my work at a high quality. It also didn't help that at one point it looked like I had lost everything the day before hand-in date. In order to cope with these issues, I looked at the situation to determine what strengths I could put into each individual piece of work to get the best possible grades. After the temporary setback of losing work, I found out what was backed up and worked on what I had lost over a short evening.

For those going into higher education, I suggest putting as much effort as you can into your work regardless of however grim things might look.

# Personal care

Personal care or personal assistance is the practical help and support you need for your daily life. For example; support with cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene and transport. Organising personal care when you go to university or college can be complicated so 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 will need to take some proactive steps.

## FUNDING PERSONAL CARE

Disabled Students' Allowances (see Section 9) only cover education costs, not disability-related living costs. When you go to university or college your personal care package should be funded by the local authority where you are 'ordinarily resident.' This means deciding where you feel more settled and where you have the strongest ties. For many students this is the area they come from. This might be because they plan to go home during the holidays, their friends and family live there, and they plan to return after graduating. If however you wish to settle in the area where your university or college is based, you will need to contact your new local authority instead.

## THE PROCESS

The social services department within the local authority should carry out a needs assessment. In some local authorities you can complete your own questionnaire.

The health and social services team will then put together a personal care plan, which may include healthcare, equipment (a hoist for example) or personal assistance. Alternatively in some areas the assessment will give you a certain number of points and you will be told how much money is available to meet your needs. This is known as an indicative budget.

A support plan is then drawn up outlining how the budget is to be used. You can put together the support plan yourself or with support from an organisation like a local disabled people's organisation.

Having your personal budget paid directly to yourself means you can buy the services and equipment that have been agreed in your care plan. If you decide to have direct payments you will also take on the responsibility of employing people and dealing with tax and national insurance. You can find out more about employing people using direct payments from Independent Living Alternatives [www.ilanet.co.uk](http://www.ilanet.co.uk).

You may already have a personal care package in place. However going to university might mean you need to go through the process again because of your change of circumstances.

## ARRANGING PERSONAL CARE

Some universities recruit volunteers who can provide personal care support to disabled students. Volunteers are usually students or recent graduates. The university will arrange their accommodation and give them an allowance.

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) is a national volunteer agency that recruits full-time volunteers to help disabled people live independently in the community. Volunteers are aged between 16 and 35 and work for four to 12 months, receiving accommodation, food, pocket money and travel expenses in return.

CSVs are often recent graduates or are planning to go to university, so they have an interest in or experience of the university environment. A member of staff at the university acts as a supervisor for the volunteers.

**Catherine Alexander** BA (Hons) English – Lancaster University



**I have congenital muscular dystrophy, which means I use a powered wheelchair to get around. I also need help with most day-to-day tasks, including washing, dressing, preparing meals and getting to lectures and seminars.**

I also need help overcoming the physical barriers of my course, so I get assistance with things like notetaking and collecting books from the library.

I decided to go to university as it was the obvious next step for me. I achieved good grades in my A-Levels and the kinds of jobs I am interested in require a degree.

After a lot of thought and research, I decided to move away from home as the universities near where I live did not really provide the course I wanted. I also felt that if I stayed at home, I would miss out a lot on the social part of university life.

However, I was very nervous about this decision. At home I had a reliable care package and people who knew my needs well and I felt comfortable with. I was also worried about getting full-time care. At home I only had carers come in for my personal care and my dad did all the other things like meals.

“**To students considering moving away from home to go to university, I would say to go for it!**”

I heard about Community Service Volunteers (CSV) from the disability officer at Lancaster. The volunteers would live with me on campus and provide my care for up to a year. Social Services were quite keen on this idea from a financial point of view, as it was relatively inexpensive for a 24-hour care package – they would only have to pay for the volunteers’ accommodation, food and living costs. However, it still had to be approved at ‘panel’, which was an anxious wait!

On the whole, I feel that CSV is a great way of providing care. It allows me the flexibility to be able to decide what I do, rather than being tied to a schedule of carers coming in and out at certain times. I also feel I have made friends for life with several of my volunteers. However, it can be difficult if you don’t gel with a volunteer – you do spend a lot of time together so it’s important you get on with them! I would also say it is hard to get used to having different volunteers every year.

It is a huge change and takes a lot of getting used to, but I now love living away from home and my new-found independence.

The local community nursing service can provide help for disabled people who are temporarily resident in their area. If you attend a university away from home you're entitled to apply for regular help from your local service. The service is available across the UK. Even if you don't choose to receive regular help from the service, you may find it useful to access it from time to time, for example if your regular assistant has time off. Your GP or local health centre will be able to give you more information about the service and any costs involved.

If you're organising your own support, private agencies can be useful to manage the assistants, and to remove you from the responsibility of being the employer. However, you should make sure you know exactly how much funding you have available as private agencies can be expensive. Also agency staff may not have experience of working with people in an academic environment. Agencies can be useful if you need to fill any gaps, for example, if your assistant becomes ill or needs time off. The university may be able to recommend a local agency that students have used in the past.

### FURTHER HELP

The disability officer at the university or college may be able to help coordinate care support. There might also be a disabled students' officer within your university's Students' Union who can assist.

Some universities have adapted or purpose-built accessible accommodation and are able to provide facilities, rooms and assistants. This may include night and day care, full board and transport. They will probably have staff in charge of assistance and specialist nursing back-up.

A number of local authorities across England are piloting the 'Right to Control'. These local authorities are known as 'Trailblazers' and are working towards a more personalised agenda. Funding is drawn from a number of different sources and paid directly to the disabled person or someone working on their behalf.

Disabled people claiming Housing Benefit are entitled to claim funding towards an extra bedroom for a carer. Contact your local authority for details.



**Fred Suter** BA (Hons) Modern Languages University of Southampton



**Being deaf might seem a huge hurdle and studying languages an even bigger one.**

On the academic side of things, such as finding different pathways for listening exercises, it may be a bit of a challenge sometimes. However it is definitely far from impossible as many might think. With the support of my tutors and especially the disability team here, everything is done to ensure that my university experience matches the one of a hearing student.

From my Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) any extra equipment which I require at university, such as a printer or specific books, are paid for by Student Finance. This is important as I rely more on sources which I can read than the average student.

The greatest piece of support is Remote Captioning. Thanks to this system, I manage the biggest hurdle, which is communication. I even wish I had this service 24 hours a day! I can read from my laptop screen every word being said in the classroom, just like subtitles, milliseconds after it is said. I feel totally equal to the other students.

Of course this support doesn't just fall into my lap, what I do is work actively together, help sort out things where I can. And this also counts for other kind of support that I get.

“ I feel totally equal to the other students ”

I am open to discussing needs with tutors and the disability team, searching for the best equipment available and handing in signatures quickly when required. I think that way I benefit from it in the best way possible, because what goes around, comes around.

Of course university isn't all positive. It hurt to see students from my corridor in halls making friends in the first week but hardly ever knocking on my door. I kept telling myself at the beginning to stay calm and that it takes time, and I think I was right.

While others may make their friendships really quickly, I need to find the people who are worth it and who I want to go into deeper relationships with and I am surprised how quickly that actually happened. I already have my social circle built and I can't wait for my second year!

I think if you are deaf, you are much more in charge of yourself. You have to take the first steps and that can be pretty challenging because deafness no doubt causes a lack of confidence. But if you build the larger part of the bridge towards other students, work closely together with the people who want to help you, then it is worth it and I can absolutely recommend having the courage and taking the step towards university.

# Other financial help

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

## ADULTS DEPENDANTS' GRANT

If you're studying a full-time course and have a husband, wife or partner or another adult who depends on you financially, you may be entitled to an Adult Dependants' Grant. In Scotland, you can only receive Dependants' Grant for your husband or wife if you're legally married or have entered into a Civil Partnership with them. The grant is calculated by taking into account the income of your dependants as well as your own income. The maximum amount available is £2,642 per year. Contact your awarding authority for more information.

## CHILDCARE GRANT

If you're a full-time student from England or Wales and have dependent children in registered or approved childcare, you can apply for a Childcare Grant. The grant pays 85% of actual childcare costs in term times and holidays up to a maximum amount per week. Contact your awarding authority for more information. In Scotland, you can also apply to your institution for help from the Higher Education Childcare Fund and, if you are a lone parent, you can apply for an additional grant from SAAS.

## PARENTS' LEARNING ALLOWANCE

If you're a full-time student with dependent children, you may be able to apply for help with course-related costs, such as books, materials and travel. The amount you can receive depends on your household income, including your wife or husband or civil partner. The maximum amount available is £1,508 per year.

## HARDSHIP FUNDS

These schemes are similar across the UK:

- Access to Learning Fund (England)
- Discretionary Fund (Scotland)
- Financial Contingency Fund (Wales)
- Support Fund (Northern Ireland)

Each institution administers the funds, which are available to support students experiencing financial hardship. In England and Wales, priority is given to part-time students, mature students, disabled students, final year students and care leavers over the age of 18. In Northern Ireland and Scotland, it's up to each individual university to decide how to use the funds. They are often used to pay towards the costs of diagnostic assessments for dyslexia. Contact student services at your university or college for details of how to apply.

## DISABILITY AND WELFARE BENEFITS

Most full-time students can't claim welfare benefits. However, if you have a disability, you may still be able to apply for the benefits listed below. 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. Disability Rights UK produces a range of factsheets on studying and claiming benefits. 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.

### Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

The fact you're going into higher education shouldn't affect any DLA you currently receive. Your DLA can be reviewed but, if your care needs or mobility difficulties are the same, there's usually nothing to worry about. If you get DLA you should apply for the Special Support Grant instead of the usual Maintenance Grant and you may also be

eligible for Housing Benefit and income related Employment and Support Allowance. From 2013 to 2016, Personal Independence Payment will replace DLA but your entitlement shouldn't be affected by studying.



### **Inccapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance**

If you currently get Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance, at some point before March 2014 you'll be re-assessed under the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). If you're found to have limited capability for work, you'll be moved onto ESA and placed in either the Support Group or the Work Related Activity Group. There's no rule which says you can't get these benefits while you're studying. A decision about your benefit should only be made after looking at your individual circumstances. Many courses are very different from work. There's often more flexibility at college or university and you can get support and adjustments on the course. The daily tasks will probably be different, the hours may be less and there is usually less pressure.

### **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

You may be able to claim income-related ESA as a full-time student if you receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. However, if you're eligible for a student loan (even if you don't take it out) part of it will be considered as income and the amount of income-related ESA will be substantially reduced.

### **Housing Benefit**

The rules for Housing Benefit are similar to those for income-related ESA. Students who receive any part of DLA (or Personal Independence Payment) should be able to apply. You should also be eligible if you're registered blind, or receive Disabled Students' Allowances because you're deaf. See Disability Rights UK factsheet F44 for full details. Housing Benefit can be paid towards the cost of living in halls provided by your university or college, as well as if you live in private rented accommodation. Disabled people claiming Housing Benefit are also entitled to claim funding towards an extra bedroom for a carer. Contact your local authority for details.

### **UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

Universal Credit is a new benefit for people on low incomes, due to be introduced in October 2013. Universal Credit will be means tested and will replace Income Support, income-based Jobseekers Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

From April 2014 it will probably replace Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. People who already claim other means-tested benefits and Tax Credits will be transferred to Universal Credit between April 2014 and 2017.

Generally you will not be able to claim Universal Credit if you are 'receiving education'.

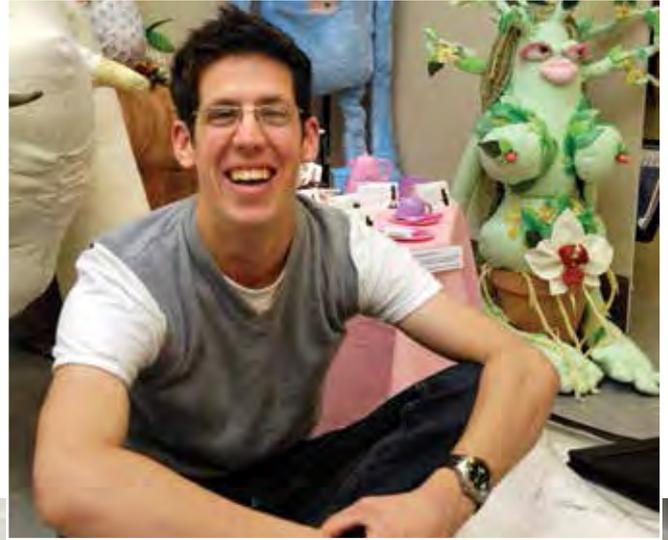
What this means is not yet clear, although it seems most likely that most full time students will be excluded from claiming. However there are expected to be exceptions to this. The government is currently consulting on how disabled students will be treated under the new system.

### CHARITABLE TRUSTS

If you have costs which can't be covered by funding from any other sources, you could try applying to a charitable trust such as the Snowdon Award scheme [www.snowdonawardscheme.org.uk](http://www.snowdonawardscheme.org.uk). Snowdon bursaries are made for one or two years and can be up to £2,500. The closing date for applications is 31 May but the panel also meets in October to consider late applications – funds permitting.. Disability Rights UK produces a free booklet called *Funding from charitable trusts*.

### PART-TIME WORK

Many students work part-time to supplement their incomes. Students work in lots of places, including the students' union, local restaurants, shops and call centres. Many universities have student 'job shops' for part time work on campus or in the local area or you could talk to the careers office or students' union.



# After you arrive



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'. Freshers' Week is usually in the week before teaching starts. If you're living on campus you'll probably move in at the start of this week. There'll be a range of activities. Some will be compulsory, such as formally registering for your course. Others will be optional, such as social activities to meet fellow students or tours of the library. You may also have a chance to meet the tutors on your course.

Most students have an enjoyable experience right from the beginning. Sometimes there are practical difficulties but these can usually be resolved without too much trouble.

Talk to your departmental tutors about your progress and any problems you are having with the course. It's not unusual for students to miss lectures and fall behind with their work from time to time. Most student services can guide you to study support that may be able to help you manage course work or organise exam revision. However, sometimes students experience difficulties connected with their disability. If this happens to you, remember that disability services are there to help.

## PERSONAL SUPPORT

It can take a few weeks to get into a routine with interpreters, notetakers, readers or volunteers. This is normal. You might just need some time to get used to each other's working methods. 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.

## EQUIPMENT

It can take a while to learn to use any new equipment. If you're having difficulties, there's probably someone in the institution who can help. 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.

Contact your awarding authority or ask your Disability Officer to do this for you.

## TEACHING STYLES

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.

If you don't feel confident about approaching academic staff yourself, ask the disability officer to speak to them for you.

## YOUR HEALTH

If your disability affects your health, your work may start to be affected. Institutions 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 officer if you start to fall behind. Don't wait until it becomes a big problem.

## LEAVING HOME

Living away from home can be difficult at first. It usually takes time to get used to new surroundings. Once you have settled in, you can begin to enjoy the opportunities that higher education offers.

## OTHER SUPPORT

Some institutions have disabled students' groups or societies, where you can speak to other students and share your frustrations, problems and ideas. 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.

You can also contact the Disability Rights UK student helpline for information and advice:

**T** 0800 328 5050

**E** [skill4disabledstudents@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:skill4disabledstudents@disabilityrightsuk.org)

## COMPLAINTS

As the case studies in this guide show, disabled students usually have very positive experiences of higher education. Most institutions have excellent support arrangements and any difficulties can be quickly resolved.

Occasionally however 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 officer and try and sort things out informally.

If this doesn't work, you would then need to follow the institution'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.



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

## SECTION 12: AFTER YOU ARRIVE

If you feel that a college or university has discriminated against you, contact the Disability Rights UK student helpline for details of the Equality Advisory Support Service (previously the Equality and Human Rights Commission helpline) or 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 Office of the Independent Adjudicator in Higher Education (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 further information on making a complaint, including the role of the OIA and your rights under the Equality Act, please refer to the booklets:

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

These can be downloaded free from the publications section of the Disability Rights UK website: [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/studentpublications.htm](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/studentpublications.htm)

The Equality and Human Rights Commission website has a series of guidance documents which can be used as a guide for cases. Although mainly for legal professionals, you may find it useful to refer to the education guidance document (non-statutory Code of Practice) What equality law means for you as an education provider – further and higher education.

# Resources

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### back on course

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

The back on course advice service is closing in September 2012 but the website will continue. It holds a range of information for people who have withdrawn from higher education before completing their studies. Its resources will be useful to anyone interested in returning to education or exploring other options, such as employment, training or apprenticeships

### BBC Ouch!

[www.bbc.co.uk/ouch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch)

BBC's online disability magazine. Includes a series of disabled student diaries.

### Bright Knowledge

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

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

### Careers Wales

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

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

### Discover DSA

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

Series of videos case studies illustrating the range of support available through Disabled Students' Allowances.

### Money Saving Expert

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

See Students & 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.

### Open Days

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

Online directory of university and college open days across the UK.

### Premia

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

Collection of downloadable resources designed to make the research environment more accessible to disabled postgraduate research students. Part of Vitae [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk).

### 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.

### Research Councils UK

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

Research Councils UK (RCUK) is a partnership of the UK's seven Research Councils covering medical and biological sciences, astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities. For information about contacting individual Research Councils see the contacts section of the RCUK website.

### Scholarship Search UK

[www.scholarship-search.org.uk](http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk)

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

## RESOURCES

### Skills Development Scotland

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

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

### Student Cashpoint

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

Information on student grants, loans, bursaries, scholarships and awards across the UK.

### Student Finance

[www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

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.

### 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 institution.

### unistats

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

Helps students compare universities and colleges based on official statistics including the National Student Survey.

### Young People

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople)

Information about careers and advice and support on a range of issues affecting young people.

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## PUBLICATIONS

### A guide to financial support for students in higher education

Detailed information on all aspects of financial support. Full and part-time versions available free from the BIS Information line or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk).

### Access to Higher Education Diploma – Student guide

Published by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Available from the Access to HE website [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk).

### Bridging the Gap 2013/2014

A guide to Disabled Students' Allowances in higher education. Available from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills or [www.direct.gov.uk/dsas](http://www.direct.gov.uk/dsas).

### Changes for 2013 entry – an adviser's guide to UCAS

This guide for advisers outlines the changes to the UCAS and CUKAS schemes for 2013 entry.

### Choosing Your Degree Course and University

Published by Trotman. A guide to choosing courses of higher education. RRP £24.99

### Choosing your path. Disclosure: it's a personal decision

Published by the University of Western Sydney, Australia. This is a web-based resource with information about options and pathways that disabled people can use when being open about their disability in education and employment. Available from <http://pubsites.uws.edu.au>.

**Disability Rights UK information booklets**

Disability Rights UK produces a range of information booklets for disabled students. They cover topics such as the Equality Act, telling people about your disability, funding and adjustments for disabled students. Available from [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/studentpublications.htm](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/studentpublications.htm).

**Disclosure**

Published by AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability based in Ireland. This booklet provides a suggested approach to telling people about your disability and a useful self assessment checklist. Available from [www.ahead.ie](http://www.ahead.ie).

**The Lifelong Learning Guide**

Free guide for mature students published by UCAS.

**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.

**Prospects Postgraduate Guide**

A comprehensive guide to funding postgraduate study. Available in most university careers services or online. £6.99

**Student Support in Scotland**

Free booklet with information on funding for undergraduates in Scotland. Available from SAAS in hard copy or on their website [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk).

**The Times Good University Guide 2013**

Contains league tables on more than 60 subject areas and over 100 UK universities. RRP £16.99

**USEFUL ORGANISATIONS****EDUCATION****Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)**

**T** 020 7215 5555

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

**Department for Education**

Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3PT

**T** 0370 000 2288

Textphone 18001 0370 000 2288

Student Support (UK) 0845 300 5090

Student Support (EU) 0141 243 3570

Publications 0845 602 2260

**F** 01928 794 248

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

Web contact form:

[www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

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

Centrum House, Second Floor, 38 Queens Street, Glasgow G1 3DX

**T** 0141 548 8006

**F** 0141 548 8001

**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 access centres offering needs assessments for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). Responsible for carrying out annual audits with DSA-QAG registered assessment centres and suppliers, ensuring that the Quality Assurance Framework and Service Level Agreements are being adhered to by registered members.

## RESOURCES

### Erasmus

British Council, 1 Kingsway, Cardiff CF10 3AQ

**T** 029 2092 4311

**F** 029 2092 4301

**E** [erasmus@britishcouncil.org](mailto:erasmus@britishcouncil.org)

**W** [www.erasmus.ac.uk](http://www.erasmus.ac.uk)

Advice and information on the Socrates-Erasmus programme and funding for study or work abroad.

### The Graduate Teaching Training Registry (GTTR)

Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham GL52 3LZ

**T** 0871 468 0469

TypeTalk 18001 0871 468 0469

**F** 01242 544 961

**E** [enquiries@gtrr.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@gtrr.ac.uk)

**W** [www.gtrr.ac.uk](http://www.gtrr.ac.uk)

Deals with information and applications for graduate teacher training (PGCE) courses.

### ILA Scotland

PO Box 26833, Glasgow G2 9AN

**T** 0808 100 1090

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

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

ILA is a Scottish Government scheme for anyone over 18 and living in Scotland. If you earn £22,000 a year or less, you can apply for a learner account that will give you £200 a year towards a wide range of courses.

### NHS BSA Student Bursaries

Hesketh House, 200-220 Broadway, Fleetwood FY7 8SS

**T** 0845 358 6655

Open Mon to Fri 8am-6pm ☞

Sat 9pm-3pm

**F** 01253 774 491

**E** [nhsbsa.sbaccount@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.sbaccount@nhs.net)

**W** [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students)

Information on bursaries available to students can be found on their website along with applications forms.

### NUS (National Union of Students)

4th Floor, 184-192 Drummond Street, London NW1 3HP

**T** 0845 5210 262

**E** [nusuk@nus.org.uk](mailto:nusuk@nus.org.uk)

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

Facebook: [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@nus-usi.org](mailto:info@nus-usi.org)

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

The student movement in Northern Ireland.

### NUS Scotland

29 Forth Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LE

**T** 0131 556 6598

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

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

Provides information to affiliated student associations in Scotland.

### NUS Wales

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.nus.org.uk/wales](http://www.nus.org.uk/wales)

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

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

3rd Floor, Kings Reach, 38-50 Kings Road, Reading RG1 3AA

**T** 0118 959 9813

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

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

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/oiahe>

An independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

### Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

- T** 01452 557 000
- F** 01452 557 070
- E** [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)
- W** [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Sets and reviews standards at UK higher education institutions.

### Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

Gyleview House, 3 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh  
EH12 9HH

- T** 0300 555 0505; textphone 0131 244 5107  
Phone line open Mon to Thurs 8.30am-5pm  
☎ Fri 8.30am-4.30pm
- W** [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk)

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

SAAS is the awarding authority in Scotland.

### Student Finance England

PO Box 210, Darlington DL1 9HJ

- T** 0845 300 5090; textphone 0845 604 4434  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 8am-8pm ☎  
Sat and Sun 9am-5.30pm
- W** [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

Student Finance England 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 <http://apps.facebook.com/financeguide>

### Student Finance Northern Ireland

- T** 0845 600 0662
- M** Minicom 0845 604 4434  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 8am to 8pm,  
Sat and Sun 9am-5.30pm
- 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** 0845 602 8845; textphone 0845 603 1693  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 8am-8pm  
☎ Sat 9am-1pm
- W** [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

### Student Loans Company Limited

100 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 7JD

- T** 0845 026 2019  
Office 0141 306 2000
- F** 0141 306 2005
- W** [www.slc.co.uk](http://www.slc.co.uk)

Provides information on student loans.

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

Customer Service Unit, PO Box 28, Cheltenham  
GL52 3LZ

- T** 0871 468 0468  
Textphone 18001 0871 468 0468  
Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.30am-6pm
- E** [enquiries@ucas.com](mailto:enquiries@ucas.com)
- W** [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

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

In addition, UCAS has an official presence on Facebook [www.facebook.com/ucasonline](http://www.facebook.com/ucasonline) and Twitter [https://twitter.com/UCAS\\_online](https://twitter.com/UCAS_online)

### UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs

9-17 St Albans Place, London N1 0NX

- T** 020 7288 4330
- T** Advice service: 020 7107 9922  
Textphone 1800 1020 7107 9922  
Advice line open Mon to Fri 1pm-4pm  
(UK time)
- F** 020 7288 4360
- W** [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

## RESOURCES

### DISABILITY

#### Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID)

19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL

**T** 0808 808 0123; textphone 0808 808 9000

Phone line open Mon to Fri 9am-5pm

**F** 020 7296 8199

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

18 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD

**T** 020 7380 6500; Helpline 0808 800 4050

**E** [info@arthritiscare.org.uk](mailto:info@arthritiscare.org.uk)

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

#### Benefits Enquiry Line for people with disabilities, carers and representatives

2nd Floor, Red Rose House, Lancaster Road, Preston PR1 1HB

England, Scotland, Wales:

**T** Helpline 0800 882 200

Textphone 0800 243 355

Open Mon to Fri 8.30am-6.30pm,

Sat 9am-1pm

#### British Dyslexia Association (BDA)

Unit 8 Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane, Bracknell RG12 7BW

**T** 0845 251 9003

Helpline 0845 251 9002

Phone line open Mon to Fri 10am-4pm and open late on Tues & Weds 5pm to 7pm

**F** 0845 251 9005

**E** [helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

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

Offers information, advice and support to people with dyslexia.

#### Capability Scotland

11 Ellersley Road, Edinburgh EH12 6HY

**T** 0131 337 9876; textphone 0131 346 2529

**F** 0131 346 7864

**E** [ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk](mailto:ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk)

**W** [www.capability-scotland.org.uk](http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk)

Provides free confidential advice and information on a range of disability issues including advice on cerebral palsy.

#### CSV (Community Service Volunteers)

237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ

**T** 020 7278 6601

Phone line open Mon to Fri 8.30am-5.30pm

**F** 020 7833 0149

**E** [information@csv.org.uk](mailto:information@csv.org.uk)

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

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

#### DIAL UK

**T** 0808 800 3333

**E** [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)

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

Dial UK is a network of disability information and advice lines. They can give advice on issues such as welfare benefits, community care, equipment, independent living and transport.

#### Dyslexia Scotland

Stirling Business Centre, Wellgreen, Stirling FK8 2DZ

**T** 01786 446 650

Helpline 0844 800 8484

Open Mon to Fri 10am-1pm & 2pm-4pm

**F** 01786 471 235

**E** [helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

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

To enable and encourage people with dyslexia to reach their potential in education, employment and in life.

### Epilepsy Action

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

**T** 0808 800 5050

Phone lines open Mon to Thurs  
9am-4.30pm and Fri 9am-4pm

**E** [helpline@epilepsy.org.uk](mailto:helpline@epilepsy.org.uk)

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

Offers a range of services including information and advice.

### Equality and Human Rights Commission (England)

Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester  
M4 3AQ

**T** 0161 829 8100

**F** 0161 829 8110

**E** [info@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:info@equalityhumanrights.com)

**W** [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

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

### Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland)

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street,  
Glasgow G2 8DU

**T** 0141 228 5910

**F** 0141 228 5912

**E** [scotland@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:scotland@equalityhumanrights.com)

**W** [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### Equality and Human Rights Commission (Wales)

3rd Floor, 3 Callaghan Square, Cardiff CF10 5BT

**T** 02920 447710

**F** 02920 447712

**E** [wales@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:wales@equalityhumanrights.com)

**W** [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### Independent Living Fund

Equinox House, Island Business Quarter, City  
Link, Nottingham NG2 4LA

**T** 0845 601 8815; textphone 0845 601 8816

**F** 0115 945 0942

**E** [funds@ilf.org.uk](mailto:funds@ilf.org.uk)

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

Provides a contribution towards the cost of privately engaging a care agency or employing a personal assistant for personal and domestic care duties.

### Lead Scotland

Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh  
EH2 4RG

**T** 0131 228 9441

Textphone 18001 131 228 9441

**F** 0131 229 8082

Information service 0800 999 2568

**E** [info@lead.org.uk](mailto:info@lead.org.uk)

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

Lead Scotland 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

Granta House, 15-19 Broadway, London E15  
4BQ

**T** Mind infoline 0300 123 3393

Open Mon to Fri 9am-6pm

**E** [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

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

Provides an information service and information booklets about mental health.

## RESOURCES

### Multiple Sclerosis Society

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

**T** England: 020 8438 0700

Scotland: 0131 335 4050

NI: 028 90 802 802

Wales: 029 2078 6676

Helpline 0808 800 8000

Open Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

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

The MS Society provides information and support in the UK to anyone affected by MS from our network of over 350 local branches.

### National Autistic Society

393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG

**T** 020 7833 2299

Helpline 0808 800 4101 open 10am-4pm

**F** 020 7833 9666

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

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

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

### Prospects (National Autistic Society)

#### Student Support

**E** [eleanor.sharpe@nas.org.uk](mailto:eleanor.sharpe@nas.org.uk)

**T** 020 7704 7450

Provides practical support and information to further and higher education students with Asperger Syndrome.

### RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

**T** 020 7388 1266

Helpline 0303 123 9999

Phone line open Mon to Fri 9am-5pm

**E** [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

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

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

### RNIB Cymru

Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD

**T** 029 2045 0440

**E** [cymruevents@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cymruevents@rnib.org.uk)

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

### RNIB Northern Ireland

40 Linehall Street, Belfast BT2 8BA

**T** 028 9032 9373

**E** [rnibni@rnib.org.uk](mailto:rnibni@rnib.org.uk)

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

### RNIB Scotland

12-14 Hillside Crescent, Edinburgh EH7 5EA

**T** 0131 652 3140

**E** [rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk](mailto:rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk)

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

### Scope

6 Market Road, London N7 9PW

**T** 0808 800 3333

Open Mon to Fri 9am-5pm

Text messaging: Text SCOPE plus your message to 80039.

Texts are free to the sender.

**E** [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk)

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

Scope 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; textphone 0131 651 6067

**F** 0131 651 6502

**E** [ruth.simpson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.simpson@ed.ac.uk)

**W** [www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk](http://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.



The Open  
University

# “ If the student can't come to the university, the university should come to the student ”

The Open University believes that everyone should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential through learning. Every year more than 13,000 disabled people study with us. So you won't be on your own.

Most qualifications don't have entry requirements and are affordable. Wherever possible we provide support services to enable people to study and take part in university life.

#### Support available includes:

- advice and guidance
- needs assessments
- assistive technology and equipment
- support from people
- study material in alternative formats

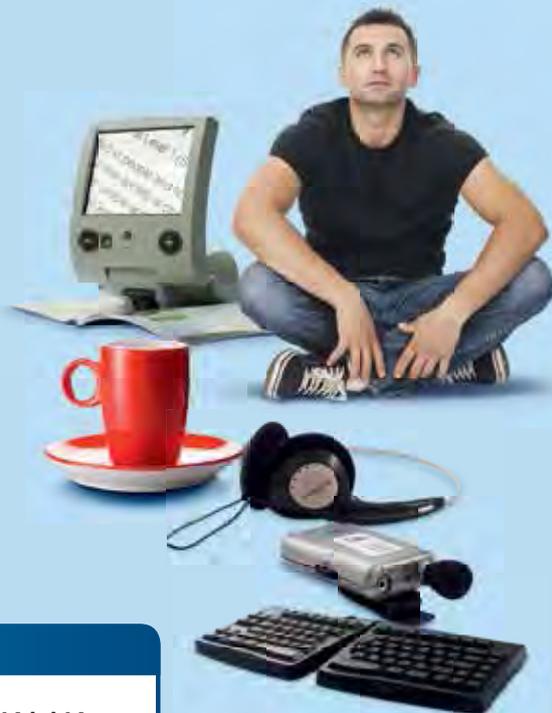
Our flexible method allows you to study from home, and with around 250 qualifications and a wide range of recognised certificates, diplomas and degrees to choose from.

**“It's given me a completely different outlook and I have so many new skills”**

Steve McNeice,  
Open University graduate.

To find out more

- ▶ **0845 300 60 90** Quoting ref: LANAAN
- ▶ **[www.openuniversity.co.uk/opentoyourneeds](http://www.openuniversity.co.uk/opentoyourneeds)**



INSPIRING LEARNING

## ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

Disability Rights UK was formed in 2012 through a unification of Disability Alliance, Radar and National Centre for Independent Living. We aim to be the largest national pan-disability organisation, led, run and controlled by disabled people.

Disability Rights UK focuses on:

- promoting meaningful independent living for disabled people
- promoting disabled people's leadership and control
- breaking the link between disability and poverty
- campaigning for disability equality and human rights

### Disability Rights UK and Skill

Into Higher Education was an annual publication from Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. Skill closed in 2011 but many of its activities, including preparation of this guide, have been taken on by Disability Rights UK.

### Other publications

We are well known as the authors of the *Disability Rights Handbook*, our annual guide to welfare benefits and services. We also produce a range of other guides and information, much of which is free to download. These include *Doing Careers Differently* and *Doing Sport Differently*. Our booklets for disabled students cover various topics including the Equality Act, funding from charitable trusts and postgraduate education.

## Disability Rights UK

Into Higher Education 2013  
ISBN: 978-1-903335-58-1  
Published by Disability Rights UK © 2012

Written by Tony Stevens and Barbara Waters  
Main photography by Dick Makin Imaging  
Design and production by Anderson Fraser

Supported by



## 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

Disability Rights UK runs the former Skill helpline providing free information and advice to disabled students about post-16 opportunities including; further and higher education, employment, apprenticeships and volunteering.

### Helpline opening hours:

Tues 11.30am-1.30pm & Thurs 1.30pm-3.30pm

☎ 0800 328 5050

✉ [skill4disabledstudents@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:skill4disabledstudents@disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Policy and campaigns

Disability Rights UK is a campaigning organisation. We are particularly concerned with disability, welfare and tackling poverty. We have also taken on delivery of some of Skill's policy functions including working to influence decision-makers on matters concerning access to and support in further and higher education for disabled students.

### Membership

We are a membership organisation with over 700 members, including universities, colleges and individual disabled students and jobseekers. We also run a helpline for member organisations.

Disability Rights UK  
12 City Forum, 250 City Road,  
London EC1V 8AF  
Registered Charity No. 1138585.  
Company No. 07314865.

Telephone: 020 7250 3222  
Textphone: 18001 020 7250 3222  
Fax: 020 7247 8765  
Email: [enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org)  
[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)