

WHAT ARE DSAs? LEARNING SUPPORT AT YCUC EXPLAINED

If you require this information in an alternative format or want to speak to a member of staff to ensure you fully understand this information, contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk.

WHAT ARE DSAs?

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) can help support students with their learning and to cover extra costs incurred because of a disability, mental health problem, learning difficulty, or a long-term illness. You can get DSAs on top of your other student finance. You will not need to repay your DSAs.

Unlike what you might have experienced at school or college, learning & study support is not always all provided directly by a university. Instead, you normally need to apply for DSAs to get access to things like specialist equipment, computer software that will help you study, or a learning support practitioner to support you in class. Even if you have been a Level 3 student at Yeovil College, the support you received during your previous course will not automatically transfer if you come to study at the University Centre – you will need to apply for DSAs.

WHEN DO I APPLY?

If you can, it is best to apply as soon as possible once the Student Finance portal opens for applications. The process takes up to 14 weeks, so, if possible, it is much better to apply early and make sure the support is in place for when your course starts. You can apply after you have started your course, but it means you are likely to have to wait a while for your support.

HOW DO I GET SUPPORT WITH THE DSA PROCESS?

If at any stage in this process, you would like some help please feel free to contact the team at Yeovil College University Centre who will be more than happy to help you. You can email us at university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk, you can phone 01935 845454 or you can organise to come and meet with someone in person. We have highlighted below the places where people are most likely to get stuck and want to speak to us, but we are happy to help at any stage.

Please be aware that DSA support is separate from our admissions process. This means that asking for our help with your DSA application does not mean you then have to come and study with us. Equally, YCUC agreeing to support you at any stage of your DSA application does not guarantee you a place on one of our courses.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO COME TO YEOVIL COLLEGE UNIVERSITY CENTRE

If you choose to come to Yeovil College University Centre, then we would appreciate it if you got in touch to tell us that you are either applying for or have been approved for DSAs as this will help us to plan and provide appropriate support. Once you have met all conditions of your offer (for some people this will be immediate as you already hold the relevant qualifications, for others this will be after A Level or BTEC results day in the summer), we will organise a meeting to ensure appropriate support is in place and both teaching and support staff are able to best help you to succeed. This is especially important where your support may involve having assistive technology in the classroom or a non-medical helper coming into college to support you, as there are additional measures and policies we need to put in place around these areas to keep both you and other students at College safe.

THE DSAs PROCESS - HOW DO I APPLY?

1. Have a think about if you might be eligible for DSAs.

You can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) if you live in England and have a disability that affects your ability to study, such as a:

- learning difficulty, for example dyslexia or ADHD
- mental health condition like anxiety or depression
- physical disability, for example if you are partially sighted or have to use crutches
- sensory disability, for example if you are visually impaired or have a hearing impairment
- long-term health condition such as cancer, chronic heart disease or HIV.

2. Collect relevant evidence – you will need this to apply.

For disabilities, long-term health conditions and mental health conditions this will probably be a photocopy of a report or letter from a doctor / consultant. If you do not have one of these, there is a form you can take to your medical professional to fill out – get in touch with us for a hard copy, or follow this link:

https://media.slc.co.uk/sfe/1920/ft/sfe_dsa_disability_evidence_form_1920_o.pdf

If you have a specific learning difficulty (like dyslexia) you will need a photocopy of a 'diagnostic assessment' from a practitioner psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher.

3. Apply for DSAs (this normally happens whilst applying for Student Finance).

If you are applying for Student Finance online then application for DSAs should be on your 'to-do' list. If you are applying for part-time Student Finance, or are not applying for Student Finance at all, you will need to use a paper application form. The SFE website explains this in more detail, and has links to the paper forms: www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/how-to-claim

4. Receive letter from SFE (called a 'DSA 1' letter).

After you have applied, you will get a letter back from SFE (Student Finance England).

This will either say 'we need further information from you for your Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) application' – in this case you will need to provide more / different evidence to be accepted before you can move on with the process.

Or, this letter will confirm you are eligible for DSAs, and will say 'Next steps to get your Disabled Students' Allowances'. If this is the case, you will need to book a Study Needs Assessment...

5. Book your Study Needs Assessment.

Your DSA 1 letter will explain that you need to book a Study Needs Assessment and will give you a link to find your nearest Assessment Centre. The nearest one to Yeovil College is Contact Associates in Taunton, although some students find it easier to get to Assessment Centres elsewhere (e.g., Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, Exeter). Once you have picked the Assessment Centre you would like to go to, you will need to book a Study Needs Assessment – you might have to phone them up or may be able to use an online booking system. If you need help with the costs of travelling to / from this assessment, then SFE may be able to reimburse you. The assessment itself will not cost you anything: DSAs cover the cost. **If you would like a hand with finding / booking an assessment, then get in touch!**

6. Attend your meeting with the assessors.

The Study Needs Assessment is all about you working with a professional to figure out what support or specialist equipment you can get. It is not a test – you cannot get it wrong! The assessor will write up a report of recommendations – you will be sent a copy and a copy will go to SFE who will then decide what support they will fund.

7. Receive another letter from SFE (called ‘DSA 2’), explaining your recommended support.

You should then receive a letter from SFE saying ‘We’ve approved your Disabled Students’ Allowances’. This will list the support, equipment & training you are able to get, and the supplier that will provide that support / equipment / training for you.

8. You need to contact the companies in your letter from SFE to organise the support (including training).

This is the bit that goes wrong most often – please do come and see us with your DSA 2 letter if you would like a hand with contacting your suppliers! This letter just says what support / equipment you are eligible for and the company who have been picked to provide it. It does not mean the support is in place. You need to contact each company and arrange for the equipment to be delivered / support person to start attending / book a training session. (e.g., it may say you have been approved for a printer, but you still need to contact the company they have identified to confirm you want the printer and get it delivered. Or it might say you have been allocated a note-taker to scribe for you in lessons, but you still need to contact the company to organise for that person to start – they will not just automatically be there on your first day).

9. You can always do a ‘review of needs’ if something changes.

If something changes, there is a process called ‘review of needs’ where you can apply to change the support you are getting.