

WHAT IS DSA? 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 IS DSA?

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) 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 DSA 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 DSA.

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 DSA, 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 DSA PROCESS - HOW DO I APPLY?

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

You can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) 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 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:

[DSA Disability Evidence Form](#)

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 DSA (this normally happens whilst applying for Student Finance).

If you are applying for Student Finance online, then application for DSA 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.

4. Receive letter from Student Finance England

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, if you are eligible for DSA, you will be sent a letter with details of your supplier to arrange your needs assessment. If you give your permission, SFE will pass your details directly to the supplier who'll be in touch to arrange this. You will not receive your DSA unless you attend your needs assessment.

5. Attend your meeting with the assessors.

The Study Needs Assessment is not a test, you cannot get an answer wrong, and your DSA will not be taken away due to information that you provide at an assessment. The assessor is simply there to ensure that you receive the right level of support and specialist equipment.

You can usually attend the assessment online if that is your preference, but if you would rather attend face-to-face, you will be able to pick the assessment centre closest to you. 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 - DSA cover the cost.

Prior to attending your assessment, you may be asked to fill out a form with a few details about your disability and any current equipment that you have (laptop, printer, etc). If you don't know the answer to any of these questions – don't panic! The assessment centre does not expect everybody to know the exact specification of their computer; just fill out the responses to the questions that you do know.

If you would like help with finding / booking an assessment, or any other stage of the process please get in touch!

6. After the assessment.

After your assessment, a report detailing your needs and the assessor's recommendations will be sent to SFE, who will contact you to let you know if your funding has been approved, and the equipment, support, and training you are able to get. With your permission, SFE will also contact the YCUC team and your needs assessor with the outcome.

Based on the report and approved funding within your Entitlement Letter, the supplier will contact you to arrange delivery of your equipment, and Assistive Technology (AT) training. If you are awarded non-medical help (1-1 support), you will need to arrange this by contacting the supplier via the details provided within the letter. We can also help you to contact your 1:1 supplier, just get in touch!

7. Payments.

Suppliers should invoice SFE directly; you can also submit receipts to SFE to claim costs covered by your DSA. There will be more information about this included in your entitlement letter.

Please note, you shouldn't buy any equipment until your funding is confirmed, as SFE will not reimburse you for any purchases made before the date your entitlement letter is sent.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If something changes, there is a process called a 'review of needs' where you can apply to change the support you are getting. Please contact the YCUC team in the first instance, and we can support you through the process with SFE.

CONTINUING INTO NEXT YEAR

Students who don't need to reapply:

If you're a full-time undergraduate student, you don't need to reapply for DSA each year if...

- You got DSA the previous year
- You took out a Maintenance Loan or Tuition Fee Loan, or both
- You're continuing on the same course.

Students who need to reapply:

You should reapply each academic year if you...

- didn't take out a Maintenance Loan or Tuition Fee Loan
- change your course
- change from full-time to part-time study, or from part-time to full-time
- have suspended your studies and changed your course end date
- withdrew from your course and are returning to study
- are repeating a year of study.

Top-up courses:

If you're studying a top-up course and are getting other student finance like a Tuition Fee Loan or Maintenance Loan, you only need to complete a DSA Slim form for your DSA to continue.

If you only want to apply for DSA and no other student finance, you'll need to fill in a DSA1 application form.