

Information

The needs of disabled students in further and higher education

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1 Introduction

If you are disabled or have learning difficulties you may need certain facilities, specialist equipment or support services to enable you to study and to do as well as you can in further or higher education.

This information booklet provides suggestions on what you may need while studying. It is not a comprehensive list. You may need some or all of the arrangements listed, or you may need some support that is not listed. You may have more than one disability, or a disability with various effects.

The lists are not in any particular order.

You can discuss your particular needs and how to arrange any support needed with the staff member responsible for disability and/or learning difficulty at the place where you study. They might be called the Disability Officer, Learning Support Co-ordinator, Inclusive Learning Co-ordinator or something else.

There are also organisations that specialise in assessments for education, specialist equipment or needs related to specific disabilities. Refer to the 'further help' section for more information.

2 General needs you may have include:

- Access to relevant college documents, eg Disability Statement if the institution has one, equal opportunities policy, students' handbook, evacuation and safety procedures, etc
- Sufficient information and awareness amongst staff and students who know about your disability
- Staff to act as role models for other students in treating you with respect and implementing the equal opportunities policy
- Adequate financial support to cover any extra costs
- Access to all college and campus facilities
- Support and information before and during the admissions process
- Additional time to complete coursework and possibly the entire course
- Alternative exam and assessment arrangements (refer to Skill's information booklet **Exam Arrangements for disabled students**)
- Study skills support
- Specific accommodation arrangements
- Access to the Disabled Students' representative in the Student Union

3 If you are **blind or partially sighted** you may need:

- Time to get used to the campus or site
- A support teacher or worker, or a sighted guide
- A personal reader
- Tape or Braille transcription services
- Handouts and booklists in advance for transcription
- Course material in Braille or in large print, on tape or on disk
- A tape recorder
- Scribes, amanuenses or notetakers
- An explanation of visual aids in lectures (or alternative methods of teaching)
- Arrangements for practical and field work
- Specialist equipment, eg closed circuit television, computers with speech synthesisers, Braille notetakers, text scanners, etc
- A private study area in the library, longer book loans and special arrangements for photocopying
- An exercise area for your guide dog
- Good lighting, adequate signs and good colour contrasts on signs and buildings

4 If you have **speech or language difficulties** you may need:

- Modified assessment arrangements for any oral exams and presentations or group work
- Timetables to include longer tutorial and seminar sessions
- Advice and guidance from a speech and language therapist
- A textphone (eg minicom) at home, in the student union and/or somewhere easily accessible at the college
- A communication aid or interpreter
- A communication board or computer with a speech synthesiser
- E-mail facilities

5 If you have **physical disabilities** you may need:

- Physically accessible classrooms, study spaces, toilets, catering and leisure facilities and telephones
- Personal assistants or mobility helpers
- Adapted furniture for studying at home or college
- A powered wheelchair and facilities for charging it
- An adapted computer (eg for switch operation or voice input)
- A high resolution flatbed scanner
- Typing or transcription services
- A tape recorder for taping lectures, notes, etc
- Scribes, amanuenses or notetakers
- Support for practical and field work
- Particular travel arrangements
- A parking space on campus
- Timetable planning to ensure accessibility and avoid long distances
- Additional time at mealtimes for medical needs
- A rest room on campus
- Well ventilated classrooms if heat leads to discomfort
- Accessible accommodation, possibly on campus, if studying away from home

6 If you have a **medical condition** you may need:

- Alternative arrangements for work and deadlines if fatigue, stress and effects of medication are an issue
- Timetable planning to avoid fatigue and problem environments
- A tape recorder for lectures
- Arrangements to meet specific dietary needs, eg use of a fridge
- A rest room on campus or site
- Medical support and emergency arrangements

- Place of privacy to take medication and assistance if required
- Ongoing dialogue with staff if you have a hidden and/or fluctuating condition
- Contact from staff during any periods of time away from studies
- Flexibility in attendance and punctuality if treatments or therapies are tightly scheduled
- A designated parking space
- Awareness amongst staff of your condition
- Maintenance of confidentiality regarding your condition
- Specialist or adapted computer equipment, eg a screen filter or monitor without flicker if you have photosensitive epilepsy

You may not consider yourself to be disabled if you have a medical condition, but you may need additional support or special arrangements while studying. Medical conditions might include epilepsy, diabetes, ME, eczema, sickle cell anaemia, cystic fibrosis or asthma.

7 If you have **mental health difficulties** you may need:

- Timetable planning and help with your work programme to deal with stress
- Extra support and help with planning before or during exam and assessment periods
- Exam officers to be aware that problems may arise during exam periods
- Support from welfare and counselling staff
- A named contact to go to for support when necessary
- Academic staff to be clear about what they expect from you
- Flexibility in attendance and punctuality if treatments or therapies are tightly scheduled or during times when difficulties are worse than usual
- Computer equipment to enable you to study at home

- A quiet room to rest in
- Contact from staff during any periods of time away from studies
- Maintenance of confidentiality about your mental health difficulties
- Sufficient information and awareness amongst staff who do know about your difficulties to prevent major misconceptions

8 If you have **specific learning difficulties, eg dyslexia**, you may need:

- Specialist tuition support, eg language skills or structuring work
- A computer or word processor with spell-check
- A tape recorder, scanners and sound cards
- Handouts and booklists in advance of classes
- Handouts and exam papers on different coloured paper
- Special photocopying arrangements
- Extra time for library book loans
- Scribes, amanuenses or notetakers

9 If you have **learning difficulties** you may need:

- To be treated with respect as an individual, without staff being directive, patronising or making assumptions about what you know and what you can do
- Materials in plain English or with symbols
- Enough time to formulate responses
- Independent advocacy services
- A support worker
- Specific tasks and any changes of routine explained clearly

10 If you are **deaf or hard of hearing** you may need:

- A human aid to communicate, eg sign language interpreter or lip-speaker
- A qualified support teacher or tutor, eg for language tuition and concept support
- An induction loop system in lecture halls and seminar rooms
- Radio or infrared microphone system
- A textphone (eg minicom) at home, in the student union and/or somewhere easily accessible at the college
- Access to a fax machine and e-mail facilities
- For people at the college to undergo deaf awareness training
- For people you have a lot of contact with to take British Sign Language (BSL) classes
- A tape recorder and costs of copy typist met for recording lectures
- Cost of photocopying materials met
- A computer or word processor to assist with English, particularly grammar
- A flashing light or vibrating pad for the fire alarm (a flashing bell for hall of residence room)
- Notetakers
- Local authority support services for deaf or hard of hearing people
- A TV which has subtitles and video which has the capacity to record subtitles

11 If you have **Autism or Asperger syndrome** you may need:

- Immediate access to pastoral support or a particular staff member you can go to with any concern
- A dedicated support worker
- Staff to have awareness training
- Specialist tuition support, eg language skills or structuring work
- Materials in literal language
- Special photocopying arrangements
- A tape recorder in lectures
- Access to e-mail facilities
- Extra time immediately after group sessions to check they have been understood
- Alternative ways of completing team work
- To have the same information conveyed in more than one way, eg verbally and in writing
- Time to get accustomed to the campus or site
- Preparation for changes of routine, eg around deadlines and exam time

12 Funding arrangements

Some of the support arrangements mentioned above have financial implications for both you, as the student, and the institution involved. Skill produces a range of information booklets and publications that examine the funding arrangements in further and higher education for disabled students. Skill has also produced a publication for people working with disabled students called **The Coordinator's Handbook**. Visit Skill's website or contact Skill's Information Service for more details of the above-mentioned items.

13 Disability Discrimination Act 1995

It is unlawful for education and training providers and other related services to discriminate against disabled people. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, institutions have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage and they must not treat a disabled person less favourably for reasons related to their disability. For further information on the DDA refer to Skill's information booklet *The Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

14 Further help

Skill information

Skill's information booklets and publications cover further and higher education for disabled students. They are available from the Skill Information Service and on the Skill website. Contact details are on the front of the booklet.

Publications:

- Into Higher Education 2004: a guide to higher education for disabled people (updated annually)
- Financial assistance for disabled students in further education (updated annually)
- Financial assistance for disabled students in higher education (updated annually)
- The Co-ordinator's Handbook (1997)
- Students with mental health difficulties: Your questions answered (2002)
- A Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act. Good practice guide for further and higher education institutions (2002)

Information booklets:

- Applying to higher education: guidance for disabled people
- Funding for disabled students in higher education
- Applying for Disabled Students' Allowances
- Personal assistance in higher education
- Applying to further education: guidance for disabled people
- Funding for disabled students in further education
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Disability Discrimination post-16 education: The 5 Step Test
- Funding from charitable trusts
- Improving access to the physical environment for all disabled students
- Examination arrangements for disabled students
- Specialist equipment: sources of help and information
- Organisations offering advice or services to disabled people
- Community resources for disabled students

Every effort is made to update information booklets annually.

Other organisations

There are organisations with specialist expertise in most disabilities. You can get in touch with organisations giving specialist advice with the help of Skill's booklet *Organisations offering advice or services to disabled students*. Some organisations offer information services and produce guides about studying with a particular disability, for example:

- *Higher Education*, Cystic Fibrosis Trust, available on their website at www.cftrust.org.uk/index.jsp, under publications and publications library
- *Guidelines for teaching students with Asperger syndrome in further education colleges*, National Autistic Society,

available on their website at

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=129&a=2232

- *How to cope with the stress of student life*, MIND, available on their website at
- *Breaking down the barriers: access to FE and HE for visually impaired students*, RNIB, contact RNIB to order this paid publication:

Royal National Institute of the Blind

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 020 7388 1266

Fax: 020 7388 2034

You can also go to your institution, LEA, or an assessment centre (if studying a higher education course) or other independent assessment service for information about the needs you may have while studying. For details of your local assessment centre refer to **www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/dsa_.shtml**.

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