

DISABLED STUDENTS ALLOWANCES (DSA): RESEARCH COUNCILS STUDENTSHIPS – ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

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DISABLED STUDENTS ALLOWANCES (DSA): RESEARCH COUNCILS STUDENTSHIPS – ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

WHAT IS THIS LEAFLET ABOUT?

1. This leaflet provides information about Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) for postgraduate students funded by any one of the seven UK Research Councils:-

Arts and Humanities Research Council – AHRC
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council –BBSRC
The Economic and Social Research Council – ESRC
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council – EPSRC
Medical Research Council – MRC
Natural Environment Research Council – NERC
Science and Technology Facilities Council – STFC

WHAT ARE DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCES?

2. Disabled Students' Allowances are intended to help with additional expenditure for the costs of study-related requirements that you may have as a result of your disability. The allowances can cover the cost of non-medical personal assistance, items of specialist equipment, extra travel costs and general expenses.

AM I ELIGIBLE?

3. You are eligible to apply for DSA if your studentship is funded by one of the Research Councils and you have a disability, mental health problem or specific learning difficulty that means you will need additional support to undertake your postgraduate course of study.

HOW AND WHEN DO I APPLY FOR DSA?

4 Applications for DSA are normally dealt with by Research Organisations (Universities, Higher Education Institutions or other Independent Research Organisations that receive funding from Research Councils) on behalf of the Research Councils. You should contact the Disability Adviser or named contact on disability matters at your Research Organisation for advice on how to apply and what information will be required in support of an application for DSA.

DISABILITY ADVISERS AND HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU

5. Disability Advisers are available at most Research Organisations and are expected by Research Councils to have a key role in the DSA process. If you are undertaking your postgraduate study at an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) you should have access to Disability Services through the Research Organisation where you are registered for award of your postgraduate degree. Research Councils value the expertise of Disability Advisers, their understanding of the Research Organisation environment and of the nature of the postgraduate study that students will be undertaking. The role of Disability Advisers may vary between Research Organisation. Generally, however, they will:

- offer disabled students advice on sources of funding and support that may be available;

- advise students on all stages of applying for DSA;
- arrange a DSA needs assessment if necessary on behalf of students;
- help students with their DSA applications;
- advise on the particular needs that may arise from specific studentship programmes;
- help put in place the support that is recommended in the DSA needs assessment report;
- work with Accommodation Services, Social Services, Local Authorities and academic departments;
- co-ordinate training for support workers;
- make recommendations to the academic department in relation to students, for example, special exam arrangements.

WHAT INFORMATION WILL THE DISABILITY ADVISER NEED FROM ME?

6. The Disability Adviser will require written confirmation that you have a Research Council studentship; this could be either the letter from the Research Organisation or the letter from the sponsoring Research Council, which states that you have been awarded a studentship. You will also need to have medical evidence or an educational psychologist's report specifying the nature of your disability and how it impacts on your postgraduate study.

DO I HAVE TO TELL MY RESEARCH ORGANISATION ABOUT MY DISABILITY?

7. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has made it unlawful to discriminate against disabled students by treating them less favourably in their admission policies or the services they provide. Under the Act, Research Organisations must make reasonable adjustments so that disabled students are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with other students who are not disabled. Research Organisations are expected to be proactive and anticipatory in considering where changes or adjustments can be made to meet the requirements of disabled students. You should tell your Research Organisation about your disability or specific learning difficulty to make sure that you receive the support you need. However, if for some reason you do not want to tell your Research Organisation about your disability or specific learning difficulty you should contact the Research Council (see annex 1 for contact details) that is sponsoring your studentship for further advice.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT I NEED TO DO TO APPLY FOR DSA?

8. Your Disability Services will guide you on whether or not you require a needs' assessment. The purpose of the needs' assessment is to identify what particular help you will require to undertake your chosen postgraduate study programme. Needs' assessments are carried out by people with specialist experience. An assessment will take account of the study requirements of your particular studentship and help to identify the equipment and other support you will need. The assessment will also identify any training you might need to make best use of any equipment recommended. If during the course of your studentship, your disability needs change (e.g. loss of mobility, deterioration in sight), you may apply to have another DSA needs' assessment carried out to identify further extra support you may require. The costs of a needs' assessment will be met by the sponsoring Research Council. The costs of any diagnostic tests for

establishing a disability e.g. Educational psychologist assessment for specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia and dyspraxia) cannot be met from DSA funds. You may, however, be able to apply to your Research Organisation for help in meeting such costs through the Access to Learning Fund.

WHAT DOES DSA COVER/NOT COVER?

9. Disability Students Allowance (DSA) is intended to meet the costs of study related requirements that may arise during your studentship as a result of your disability. It is not meant to cover the sort of costs that all students would incur or disability related expenditure that would arise irrespective of whether or not you were undertaking postgraduate study. DSA can cover the cost of:

- specialist equipment and insurance:

items of equipment that you may need to undertake your study e.g. assistive technology equipment or special furniture that is required for study purposes in your student residence. You should ensure that any equipment purchased from DSA is covered by insurance. You can use DSA to meet the costs of insurance or extended warranty costs for any repair and modification costs for equipment purchased with DSA funds within the duration of the studentship.

- non-medical assistance

provides for helpers, such as readers, sign language interpreters, note-takers and other non-medical assistance you need to undertake your studies. Non-medical assistance costs may also include specialist study skills support, where the support will be provided by a specialist tutor. DSA is not intended to cover disability-related personal assistance costs that you would incur whether or not you were undertaking postgraduate studentship studies.

- extra travel costs:

if because of your disability you have extra travel costs related to your studies you may be eligible for help with these costs. Your Disability Adviser can give you further guidance.

- general disabled students' allowances:

these funds may be used to contribute towards other disability-related needs e.g. consumables such as tapes and Braille paper.

HOW WILL PAYMENTS OF DSA BE MADE?

10. Any DSA due to you will be paid to you by the Research Organisation, where you are registered for award of your degree.

CAN I PURCHASE EQUIPMENT BEFORE MY COURSE STARTS?

11. You may purchase equipment shortly before you start your studentship, once it has been established that you are eligible for DSA. However if you do not proceed with your studentship, you must refund the cost of any equipment you have purchased with DSA funds.

WILL I HAVE TO REPAY DSA IF I LEAVE MY POSTGRADUATE COURSE EARLY?

12. If you leave part way through your course, your sponsoring Research Council may recover some or all of your DSA. The Research Council will expect you to return only funds that you have not used in full on disability related needs.

WHAT HAPPENS TO EQUIPMENT WHEN MY STUDENTSHIP ENDS?

13. All equipment bought with DSA is, and will remain your property. You may decide to offer the equipment to your Research Organisation for other students to use, though you do not have to do this.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Research Councils Studentships contacts – see annex 1

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Chapter House
18-20 Crucifix Lane
LONDON
SE1 3JW

Information Service (Tuesdays 11:30am to 1:30pm, Thursdays 1:30pm to 3:30pm)

Phone: 0800 328 5050

Minicom: 0800 068 2422

Fax: 020 7450 0650

E-mail: info@skill.org.uk

www.skill.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission Disability Helpline (England)

FREEPOST MID02164

Stratford upon Avon

CV37 9BR

Telephone: 08457 622 633

Textphone: 08457 622 644

Fax: 08457 778 878

info@equalityhumanrights.com

Premia Resource Base

Developed specifically to raise awareness of disabled postgraduate research students' requirements

www.premia.ac.uk

ANNEX 1

Research Councils Studentship Contacts	E-mail	DSA Payment Method- Students starting in October 2008 onwards
The Arts and Humanities Research Council	You should email the Research Organisation contact given on your assessment letter or listed at www.ahrc.ac.uk	Funds paid directly to Research Organisations
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	Postaward.admin@bbrsc.ac.uk	Doctoral training grants to Research Organisations
Economic and Social Research Council	http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Support/postgraduate%5Fstudents/Liaison%5FOfficers/	Funds paid to Research Organisation against individual student records
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council	Natalie.ketcher@epsrc.ac.uk	Doctoral training grants to Research Organisations
Medical Research Council	Barry.Wynne@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk	Doctoral training grants to Research Organisations
Natural Environment Research Council	trainingawardsteam@nerc.ac.uk	Doctoral training grants to Research Organisations
Science and Technology Facilities Council	Susan.Blackwell@stfc.ac.uk	Doctoral training grants to Research Organisations