

## Disability at University: a glossary of terms



For many students who have received support or adjustments at college the transition to university can be confusing, not least because the language and terminology used about Special Educational Needs (SEND), disability and support is very different.

The aim of this guide is to help explain these differences in language and terminology so that you can understand what you need to do to access the support and adjustments you need at university.

Setting up support at university can take time. You may need to register for support and work through funding processes which can take many months to complete. Taking time to understand the terminology will help you understand what steps you need to take to access support.

**It is important to remember that none of the information about your support or adjustments at school will automatically transfer to university.** Your university won't know about your support requirements or exam arrangements unless you tell them. You should contact Disability Services as soon as you can, preferably before you finish college and with their support, so that you can send us any plans or access arrangements that you have been used to using.

## Additional resources

You can find further information about disability support at university at the following links:

- UCAS guide to disability support and finance: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students>
- Disability Rights UK student factsheets: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets>
- Disabled Students Allowance: [\*Help if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability: Disabled Students' Allowance - GOV.UK\*](#)

## Key terminology, what it means and how it differs

School term	University term	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities (SEND)</li> <li>• Special Needs</li> <li>• Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li> <li>• Additional Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability</li> </ul>	<p>Universities do not use the term ‘Special Educational Needs’ as this is specific to schools and colleges. Universities use the word <b>‘disability’</b>. This may feel unfamiliar, but the term ‘disability’ is broad and considers any neurodiversity, physical, mental or sensory impairment which has a significant impact on daily activities, and which is long term (i.e. lasts more than 12 months). For a student, daily activities might include: taking notes, writing, reading &amp; researching.</p> <p>This includes people who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are deaf or hard of hearing</li> <li>• are blind or visually impaired</li> <li>• are physically disabled, and/or have mobility difficulties</li> <li>• have a specific learning difficulty</li> <li>• have a neurodevelopmental condition</li> <li>• have a neurological condition</li> <li>• are autistic</li> <li>• have a mental health condition</li> <li>• have a long-term medical condition</li> <li>• have a combination of these</li> </ul>

		<p>If any of these apply to you, you are likely to be eligible for support and adjustments to your teaching and assessment.</p> <p><b>Although it might feel difficult or unfamiliar to use the term ‘disability’ or ‘disabled’ for the first time, remember that disability is about the barriers created by society, not about your worth, ability or intellect. Identifying as disabled gives you protection under the Equality Act 2010 and enables you to access support and adjustments.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEND Department</li> <li>• Additional Learning Support (ALS)</li> <li>• Learning Support Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Support Services</li> <li>• Disability Service</li> <li>• Wellbeing Service</li> <li>• Health Service</li> <li>• Mental Health Service</li> </ul>	<p>Use a search engine to search for plus the word ‘disability’ or contact Student Services at the university to ask for details.</p> <p>Use the Student Support Services Portal on ChiView</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo or SENDCo)</li> <li>• Learning Support Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Advisor</li> <li>• Student Wellbeing Advisor</li> <li>• Nurse Health Advisor</li> <li>• Mental Health Advisor</li> </ul>	<p>The equivalent of a SENDCo at university is someone who works in Student Support Services. Their title can vary, but will contain the word ‘advisor’</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability</li> </ul>	<p>See the section on Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability</li> </ul>	<p>See the section on Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP)</li> <li>• Statement of Needs</li> <li>• Pupil Passport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs Assessment Report</li> </ul> <p>Support to Study Reasonable Adjustments Plan</p>	<p>EHCPs are not used in University.</p> <p>The equivalent of an EHCP or Statement at university is called a Needs Assessment Report and is generated by a Needs Assessor when you apply for Disabled Students Allowance.</p> <p>If you apply for Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) you will have a Needs Assessment Report as part of the application process.</p> <p>You will have a Support to Study – Reasonable Adjustments Planner</p>
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## Accessing support in College vs University: important differences

### Accessing support in College

At College, you don't always need a diagnosis to access support. Instead, your parents may have talked with the SENCo about any challenges you are experiencing, or these may have been identified by your teachers. You may have been added to the SEN register and been supported by the SEN department.

Your SENCO may have arranged support for you, which might have included:

- Working with a teaching assistant
- Working in a smaller group
- Access to a quiet room
- Support with getting around College
- Exam arrangements

You may have had an **Education & Health Plan (EHCP)** in place. This report will have been put together by your school, your local authority, and other specialists. It will have detailed the additional support and adjustments you required at school, and it will have been used to gain additional funding to pay for this support. Any funding will have been used by your school to pay for your support, or for resources or other adjustments. **This is no longer active when you enter University. We will use the information within your ECHP to explore the adjustments you may need now.**

You may have had a **Form 8 assessment for exam arrangements** if you have difficulties with processing text, handwriting or reading speed that your college thinks might be related to a specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia; dyspraxia).

**As you were under 18 years old at College** it is likely that your parents, carer, or guardian will have been involved in many of the discussions about your support. You may not have been involved, and you probably didn't need to complete any forms to access your support. The costs of any support will have been met by your College or local authority.

### **Accessing support in University**

At university you do not need to have evidence of a diagnosed disability to access support or adjustments.

**As you are an adult**, you will be responsible for making sure that you have access to the support that you need during your studies. At most universities, this will involve registering with Disability Services. You will usually need to give some information about your disability or disabilities, and to provide some evidence if you have any.

If you are applying for the Disabled Students Allowance, you will need clinical evidence of your disability. Once you have registered, Disability Services will work with you to identify the support and adjustments you need during your studies. Some of the adjustments may be similar to those you had at school (e.g. exam arrangements), but some will be different. There are generally two categories of support and adjustments which can be implemented, as follows:

**University reasonable adjustments:** all universities are required to follow basic inclusive practice approaches and to put in place various elements of support. This may include exam arrangements, orientation and accessible resources. The cost of these adjustments will be met by the university.

**Funded support:** there are some elements of support which require funding. These include specialist one-to-one human support, known as 'Non-Medical Helpers', BSL interpretation, specialist equipment and software and disability-related travel costs. Most students are eligible for funding to cover the costs of this support. This funding is called 'Disabled Students' Allowances' (DSA) and it is available from the main Student Funding Bodies, such as Student Finance England. Disability Services will be able to advise you on your eligibility and assist you in applying for DSA. If you are not eligible for DSA, you should talk with Disability Services about alternative funding options. You are advised to apply for DSA at the same time as you apply for your Student Finance.

**Timescales:**

Student Finance England funding opens: Early March

When you have a Student Finance Reference Number you can: Apply for DSA online

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

You will need to check your emails as you will be invited to book a Needs Assessment / provide additional clinical evidence via email.

It can take between 6 – 12 weeks on average to complete the process

You will receive a copy of your Needs Assessment Report (NAR), which will also be sent to University of Chichester

2 weeks after your NAR you will receive your DSA 2 allocation letter which tells you who you need to contact to organise your support, equipment and training.

If you make your application for DSA whilst you are on course, this can take significantly longer.



Check this link to DSA for updates on timescales

**Differences in Human Support:**

At College you will have received support within your classes, from a Teaching Assistant, or Learning Support Assistant.

At University, you will see your Non-Medical Helper for Specialist Study Skills or Mentoring support outside of your class times. You arrange the time that you meet with your NMH between you, and your NMH. You can meet with them face to face, or online.

**Priority Accommodation:** You can also apply through the Disability Service, for Priority Accommodation if you need an adapted room or specific equipment.

**Remember: none of the information about your support or adjustments at College will automatically transfer to university.**

We won't know about your support requirements or exam arrangements unless you tell us. You should contact Disability Services before you finish college, and ask for support from your college to do so, as they can help you to share the disability information and reasonable adjustments that they have been using to support you.

If you have any questions, please contact: [disability@chi.ac.uk](mailto:disability@chi.ac.uk)