Disability Support at University

If you have received support for your disability at school or sixth form, it is important that you let your first-choice university know, so that you can discuss your support needs and have these in place when you start your course. It is a common misunderstanding that schools and universities liaise about students’ exam access arrangements and support needs. This is not the case.

You will need to check with your chosen university regarding the disability evidence they require. A Form 8 for exam access arrangements is not usually accepted as evidence at university, so you may need to get some new evidence.

Remember – your university will not have received any information about your support needs, and as you are an adult it is your responsibility to let them know. This handout aims to advise you on what you need to do.

Registering with the Disability Services at your chosen university

If Royal Holloway is your chosen university then your first step is to register with the Disability & Neurodiversity team at https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/help-support/disabilities-and-dyslexia/register.aspx

You will be asked to complete an online form and a consent form, and to upload the evidence of your disability.

A ‘disability’ is any physical, mental or sensory impairment which has a significant impact on your daily life, and which is long term (i.e., lasts more than 12 months). The word ‘disability’ replaces the term 'Special Educational Needs & Disabilities’ (SEND) that would have been used by your school or college. It can include a hearing or visual impairment, mobility issues, a specific learning difficulty (e.g., dyslexia), neurodevelopmental difficulties (e.g., ADHD), neurological conditions (e.g., epilepsy), autism, mental health issues and long-term medical conditions (e.g., chronic fatigue syndrome).

- If you have a Specific Learning Difficulty then you will need to upload a full Diagnostic Report, carried out by an Educational Psychologist or Qualified Specialist Teacher. The support recommendations you had at school are **not** sufficient evidence (Form 8s).
- If your disability is a medical condition, then medical evidence on headed notepaper is required. If you need an updated medical letter then we can give you a form for your consultant to complete, which will have sections for all the required information.

We will then work with you to identify and put in place any support and reasonable adjustments you need so that you are not disadvantaged by your disability. These may be similar to those you had at school, such as extra time, and include any disability-related accommodation requirements. We will need your permission in order to share information about your support needs with your department and other relevant teams and also to communicate with your family.

- Universities are not able to provide social or personal care support. You will have to arrange this with your Local Authority and/or adult social services department and we strongly recommend that you do this as soon as you know which University you will be attending.
Applying for the Disabled Students’ Allowance

The next step is to apply for the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA). This is a non-monetary grant that is available to students with a disability who are eligible for a student loan and have lived in the UK for the previous three years. Applications can be made when applying for your student loan by ticking the box that asks if you have a disability, or if you are not taking out a loan, by applying directly via www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa (if you live in England – there are different addresses for other areas in the UK). You can usually apply for the DSA from the March in the year you are due to start your studies. The application process involves:

- Completing a form and uploading your evidence – which is the same evidence as that required by Royal Holloway
- Receiving a letter advising you that you are eligible and asking you to book a Study Needs Assessment
- Booking and undertaking a Study Needs Assessment; you will have the option to attend this in person or online. During this assessment the assessor will discuss with you the equipment (including specialist software), support and adjustments that you will need during your studies and then send their report and recommendations to you, to your university’s Disability Service and to your funding body
- Having the assessor’s recommendations approved by your funding body
- Receiving a letter outlining the resources and training that you have been given
- Contacting your equipment supplier and arranging for your equipment to be delivered to you.
- Contacting the specialist software trainer and carrying out the training.

The equipment recommended will be dependent on your disability and you will need to directly arrange the training in using it. The assessor may also recommend 1:1 study skills and/or mentoring sessions of around 30 hours a year and will specify the areas of support that these sessions should provide.

If you are given study skills and/or mentoring with Royal Holloway, then we will contact you to set up the sessions. If you are given these sessions with a different provider, then you will have to contact them yourself.

Checklist

- Ensure you have the correct evidence of your disability, or arrange a diagnostic assessment as required
- Register with the Disability Service at your chosen university
- Discuss with them any adjustments, support needs and disability-related accommodation requirements
- Apply for the DSA and go through the process so that your support is available from when you start your studies and you have completed the training in the specialist software
- Contact the provider of any 1:1 study skills and/or mentoring sessions and organise your support, if the provider is not Royal Holloway.

Remember to start this process as soon as you know which university you will be attending and always contact its Disability Service if you have any questions or problems.

Royal Holloway - Disability & Neurodiversity team