



Staffordshire Regional Access Centre

A centrally based, easily accessible, highly experienced Assessment Centre open to all UK Higher Education students. As an organisation we have been supporting and assessing students for over 20 years. Our team of eight experienced and qualified Assessors provide over 500 Needs Assessments each year, across all areas of disability.

We are accredited by Disabled Students' Allowances Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG) and are a member of the National Network of Assessment Centres (NNAC). Our combination of experienced staff and facilities mean that we can assess for a wide range of disabilities including:

- Asperger's syndrome and other autistic spectrum conditions
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
- Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia
- Long standing illnesses or health conditions such as epilepsy, cancer, HIV, diabetes, heart disease
- Physical impairments or mobility issues and multiple disabilities

Regardless of where you live, or where you intend to study, you can make an appointment with us once you have received your approval letter from your Funding Body (e.g. Student Finance England, NHS etc. depending on your course).

What are the Disabled Students Allowances?

There are four elements of Disabled Students' Allowances support; the amount of Disabled Students' Allowances you receive will depend on your Disabled Students' Allowances Needs Assessment. Your assessment fee is paid by your Funding Body through your Disabled Students' Allowances. Depending on your needs, support from the Disabled Students' Allowances could include specialist equipment, a non-medical

helper allowance, help towards the additional costs of travelling to your institution, and a general allowance. The Disabled Students' Allowances can only be used to cover expenditure and equipment that arise as a direct consequence of the effects of a disability on your studies. It cannot be used to cover costs that will be incurred by all students, such as standard course textbooks, basic stationery or photocopying costs, and reasonable travel by private vehicle or public transport. It also cannot be used to cover personal care costs.

Specialist equipment allowance

This allowance is for items of specialist equipment you need to take part in your study programme and to fully benefit from your course. You may need:

- A computer* with specialist software, such as voice recognition, mind mapping or screen reading software
- Audio capturing equipment
- Specialist furniture, such as a chair, table, or back support
- Multifunction printers and scanners
- Insurance or extended warranty for the equipment

*Students funded by SFE have to pay £200 towards the cost of a new computer if needed to run any recommended assistive software.

Disabled Students' Allowances will not cover the cost of standard computer peripherals (e.g. speakers, headphones, USB drives or cables, keyboards, standard size monitors, or mice) unless they're part of a recommendation for a desktop computer. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any equipment bought with the specialist equipment allowance belongs to you. You don't have to return it when you finish your course. If computer equipment is recommended, any repairs or warranty costs you have should also be met by the Disabled Students' Allowances. If you want a higher specification computer than the one recommended by your Assessor, you may be allowed to pay the additional cost yourself, as long as it is compatible with any specialist software you need. Disabled Students' Allowances payments to equipment suppliers can be made before the term starts to give you time to get used to using new equipment.

If your equipment needs change during your course, you can make additional claims, as long as you stay within the maximum amount. Towards the end of your studies, your awarding authority is likely to be cautious about buying big items of equipment. They may ask you to consider alternative arrangements, such as leasing equipment or using human support instead.

Non-medical helper's allowance

This allowance is for any personal assistance you need to benefit fully from your course. Study support might include:

- Sighted guides
- Electronic notetakers
- Specialist notetakers for deaf and visually impaired students
- Specialist mentors (mental health / autistic spectrum)
- Mobility trainers
- Communication support workers or British Sign Language interpreters
- Assistive technology trainers
- Specialist one to one study skill support (SpLD)

Please note: the non-medical helper support is not subject specific. Where appropriate, it should be tailored to a student's individual needs and professionals delivering the support should set out clear goals and timescales for achieving these goals. It should aim to develop students' skills and to develop independent learning. A reducing level of support to enable independence should be agreed, where it is appropriate.

General and other expenditure allowance

- This allowance is intended to cover any additional costs not covered by the other allowances, for example, costs of additional printing, or small fridges for students needing to store medication. It can also be used to 'top up' the specialist equipment and non-medical helper's allowances.
- If you need specialist accommodation for example, with ensuite facilities because of your disability, Disabled Students' Allowances may be able to cover the extra costs. However, if the accommodation is managed by your college or university or one of its agents, it will be their responsibility to fund this.

Travel costs

- This allowance is intended to cover extra disability-related travel costs. It is calculated as the difference between public transport costs and the type of transport you need because of your disability. For example, you may be able to claim the difference between bus or train fares compared to using a taxi or private car to travel to and from university. The cost of a journey by car is calculated by using the mid-point range of AA motoring costs.
- There is no maximum limit to the travel allowance.
- In Scotland there are no Disabled Students' Allowances for travel. However, you may be able to claim extra disability-related travel costs from the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). You should write to SAAS to make a claim, preferably at the same time as you send in your application for the Disabled

Students Allowances. You must send SAAS proof of your disability (if you have not already done so) and give details of the additional costs.

Appointments

We are based on campus at Staffordshire University and can offer appointments at **Stoke-on-Trent**, at the Centre of Excellence, Blackheath Lane, **Stafford**, or at the Centre of Excellence at the Staffordshire University Centre of Excellence in Healthcare Education, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, **Shrewsbury**.

We will ask for some information to be returned within 5 working days of booking your Needs Assessment

- a copy of your Disabled Students' Allowances funding approval letter
- a copy of your disability evidence.
- your completed [pre-assessment questionnaire](#).

Please note that we are unable to proceed with your appointment if you do not return these documents to us within this timescale.

For information on how we process your information see [SRAC Privacy Statement](#) for details.

During your Needs Assessment you will meet with the Assessor, to talk about how your disability can affect you in relation to your course. The assessment may last up to 2 hours and the Assessor will explore with you a range of support strategies, support, equipment and assistive technology. Our assessment rooms are equipped with the latest technology and ergonomic equipment and furniture and there may be opportunity to try them during the assessment.

The Assessment Centre has additional guidance for parents, student and staff on consent to share information with a third party, please see our [guidelines](#) for information.

Cancellations - If you are unable to attend your appointment, please contact us to arrange an alternative date. Should you not attend the appointment your Funding Body will be notified and charged for the missed appointment.

After your assessment

At the end of the assessment, the Assessor will summarise the support that they will recommend in a report. A copy of your report will be sent to you (you can see a draft if you like) within 10 working days. Additionally, a copy will be sent to your Funding Body and, if you agree, to the Disability Advisor at your University. Your Funding Body will write to you to tell you how to arrange your support. You should hear if the recommendations have been approved roughly 4 weeks after the report has been

received by your Funding Body. Do not purchase items until your Funding Body has confirmed that you can.

It is essential that you book any Assistive Technology Training recommended in order to make full use of your equipment and software. Your Funding Body will let you know how to organise this.

We welcome all feedback and aim to respond to any issues as and when they arise - please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or need any clarification.

We will ask you to complete a short feedback survey when we send you your Report and another survey once you have started to access your support. We are always keen to improve the Assessment Centre and appreciate constructive feedback about how we can improve our service.

We do recognise that there may be occasions when you want to raise an issue or to make a formal complaint. In which case you will need to follow our complaints procedure which is available on our website. Please see our website which is regularly updated with the latest information and updates from your Funding Body.

Adjustments to your Disabled Students' Allowances Support

You can request consideration for adjustments in your Disabled Students' Allowances support at any point during your studies. You can do this via the telephone or via email, however if your request is particularly technical or detailed, we might ask you to email the centre to ensure we cover all of your requirements. Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for a new assessment and we might direct you to your Funding Body to discuss this further

Your Disability Advisor at your place of study could also assist you in contacting the Assessment Centre.

If it is necessary to make additional recommendations to your Funding Body, we will make these in writing, and a copy of the recommendations will be sent to you and if you requested it, to your place of study. We aim to provide you with a full response to your query within 10 working days.

Your Funding Body will review the recommendations and advise you in writing of any entitlement to additional support.

Opening Hours

Monday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Tuesday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Wednesday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Appointments available within 15 working days. We will occasionally be able to offer appointments out of office hours.

We have an answer machine available for when the Centre is closed and will get back in touch with you as soon as we can when the office reopens.

Our admin team is based at the main Assessment Centre in Stoke. However, we have two additional Outreach Centres, so please check the address and directions when you book your appointment.

Contact

Email: accesscentre@staffs.ac.uk

Tel: 01782 295716 or 01782 295717

Stoke

Staffordshire University
Trent Building
Leek Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 2DF

[Map/ Directions for Stoke](#)

Stafford

Centre of Excellence
in Healthcare
Education
Staffordshire
University
Blackheath Lane
Stafford
ST18 0YB

[Map/ Directions for Stafford](#)

Shrewsbury

Centre of Excellence in
Healthcare Education
Staffordshire University
Royal Shrewsbury
Hospital
Mytton Oak Road
Shrewsbury
SY3 8XQ

[Map/ Directions for Shrewsbury](#)

1

- Student undertaking a HE course applies to Funding Body to receive Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs)
- Application must be supported by **evidence from their GP or specialist about their disability (e.g. diagnostic assessment)**

2

- Once Funding Body has confirmed eligibility, student arranges a **DSA Study Needs Assessment**.
- Within 5 working days prior to the appointment, student provides the Assessment Centre with:
 - evidence from their GP or specialist about their disability
 - pre assessment questionnaire
 - confirmation of funding for Needs Assessment
 - Student attends the meeting

3

- **DSA Study Needs Assessment Report** produced detailing the specific support the student needs
- Copy provided to the Funding Body and student. (10 working days from the appointment)
- If a draft copy of the report is request this will add approximately 5 working days to the process

4

- Funding Body considers the report, seeking clarification from the Assessor where it is necessary.
- Funding Body processes the report, calculating the student's entitlement and confirms the level of support that will be funded.
- Funding Body contacts the student

5

- Student contacts the supplier(s) direct to obtain the support
- Supplier provides the support and invoices the Funding Body for the goods or services provided.