

Meeting your needs

for your study, residential school and assessment support

This booklet includes information on financial support which is correct at the time of publishing. The type of support and its availability may be subject to change. For the most up-to-date information you can visit our website at www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding

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The Open University Academic Services



Preface

The Open University (OU) is committed to offering disabled students and anyone who has a health condition, mental health difficulty or a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) access to all our qualifications and modules and the support and facilities they need to take part in every aspect of university life.

The OU Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan sets out our policy and commitment. It is available on our website at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives. The University is always interested in improving its services to disabled students. If you're unhappy with a particular service – or feel you've had particularly good service – please tell us.

Although we do all we can to provide students with services that meet their requirements so that they can study successfully with us, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to provide all services requested. We will give as much notice as we can of any limit on our services.

While we have done everything possible to make sure the information is accurate, the information may change in the light of altered regulations or policies, or because of financial or other restrictions.

Studying outside the UK

Not all the services described in this publication are available if you're studying outside the UK.

If you register directly with the OU but study outside the UK, you should tell your support team as early as possible if you need support because of a disability so that we can discuss options with you.

If you plan to study through one of our partner organisations, you should liaise with your local education centre (before you register) to discuss the support you feel you'll require and they will then contact us to explore the type of support that can be provided. We'll use the information you give us only to help you in your studies.

Contents

Preface	2
1 Introduction	4
1.1 What this booklet covers	4
1.2 What you'll find online	4
2 What you need to do	5
2.1 What to do before your study starts	5
2.2 What to do later	6
2.3 Filling in the disability support forms	6
3. Disabled Students' Allowance and other funds	7
3.1 What funds are available?	7
3.2 Applying for a DSA	9
3.3 The DSA needs assessment	10
3.4 If you're not eligible for a DSA	11
4 Support for your day-to-day study	11
4.1 Assistive technology	11
4.2 Working with your tutor	12
4.3 Routine study activities	12
4.4 Tutorials and day schools	14
4.5 Home kits	15
4.6 Assignments	15
5 Support at residential school	17
5.1 Equipment for use at residential school	17
5.2 Working with tutors at residential school	17
5.3 Bringing an assistant to residential school	18
5.4 Finding out about the school site	19
5.5 If you can't attend	19
5.6 Making arrangements for residential school	19
6 Support for your exam or end-of-module assessment	21
6.1 End-of-module assessments, projects and portfolios	21
6.2 Making arrangements for an exam or EMA	23
7. Support for particular disabilities and additional requirements	24
7.1 If you are blind or partially sighted	24
7.2 If you are D/deaf or hard of hearing	27
7.3 If your mobility is restricted	28
7.4 If your manual skills are restricted	30
7.5 If you have a specific learning difficulty	32
7.6 If you have a mental health difficulty	34
7.7 If you have a speech impairment	35
7.8 If you have other disabilities or health conditions	36
7.9 If you are pregnant or breast feeding	37
Appendix 1: Useful publications	38
Appendix 2: Modules available in alternative formats	39
Appendix 3: Contact details	40

1 Introduction

This booklet is for OU students who have a disability or long-term health condition that affects their studies: it describes the services and equipment available and how to apply for them. It is also useful to prospective students who want to find out more about OU study before they register for a qualification and to students who are pregnant or breast feeding as it describes additional support that can be used to meet particular needs, especially at residential school.

The booklet is available as a pdf download from www2.open.ac.uk/study/support/disability/publications, or students can find it in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) disability section.

To request services and equipment from us, once you are a registered student you should complete and return the relevant form or forms as soon as you can. There are three.

1. The **Disability Support Form**, where you give us information about your likely study needs so we can help you get each module off to a good start.
2. If you have a residential school you may also need to complete and return the **Disability Support Form (Residential School)** also known as FRF2.
3. To arrange support in your exam or end-of-module assessment you should also return the **Disability Support Form (Examinations)** also known as FRF3.

As a student you can find these forms in the Help Centre at www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/disability-publications-and-forms.

1.1 What this booklet covers

The booklet contains the essential information you'll need to help you apply for services to support your study:

- How to tell us about your needs
- Financial support for your study
- Support during your module study
- Support at residential school
- Support in exams and assessment
- Particular disabilities and how they may affect study
- Where to get more help.

1.2 What you'll find online

Registered students have access to more detailed information than this booklet, with direct links to related resources. The StudentHome [Help Centre](#) is the best place to find information on services that might change quite frequently, such as the following:

- Facilities you can ask for
- Equipment available at residential school
- Information about exam papers in alternative formats
- Arranging alternative locations for exams

- Disabled Students' Allowance and residential school
- Disabled Students Allowance and exam travel
- Information on funding schemes.

For students the websites mentioned in this booklet can be accessed from StudentHome www.open.ac.uk/students, where you will also find online resources and important information about your study. Make sure you log on regularly using your OU computer username and password.

If you are not yet registered as a student, go to www2.open.ac.uk/study/support/disability

2 What you need to do

Be sure to look closely at the modules you're required to study in order to achieve the qualification you want, and check the learning requirements and study methods. This booklet describes the typical study activities OU students undertake to help you decide which modules might suit you best.

Once you have registered as a student you can use your OU computer username (OUCU) and password to log in to your personal StudentHome page and find further information online.

There are three primary sources of help and advice for disabled students:

1. Student Recruitment for enquiries about support available if you are not yet registered on a module or a qualification
2. Your student support team for all initial enquiries about the support available – contact them through the 'Your contacts' panel in the Help Centre on StudentHome
3. Disabled Student Services for detailed information on equipment loans, communication support and support at residential school – you'll find their contact details in [Appendix 3](#).

If you need further advice about qualification requirements please talk to Student Recruitment; contact details are in [Appendix 3](#).

2.1 What to do before your study starts

Once you are registered there are three priorities to deal with before you start your first module. The first two are connected, so you may want to do them together.

Submit the Disability Support Form

Please tell us about your likely requirements by completing and submitting the Disability Support Form (available online at www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/request-study-materials-equipment-and-services or by phoning 0300 303 5303 – you may already have done this following registration. If you're likely to need any facilities or support to help with your disability, health condition, mental health difficulty or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) please make sure to complete and submit this form as soon as you can. Then we'll be able to record your disability, provide support, and send you relevant information at the right time.

If you have any difficulties completing the form, contact your student support team.

Think about the support you'll need for your module

Look carefully at the module description details given on your first module(s) at www.open.ac.uk/courses to check the study activities described, and think about the support you're likely to need to study independently.

Most modules have study materials in additional alternative formats, perhaps books with a spiral comb-binding, or in audio rather than print. You may benefit from the use of assistive technology or communication support. Once you have a good idea of what you're likely to need and checked the module description you can request what you need using the Disability Support Form.

You can update your form if you've already submitted it - just be sure you have the right arrangements in place in good time for the module start date. Equally, if your circumstances change and you need different support, contact your student support team.

Check whether you're eligible to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

[Section 3](#) tells you more about the DSA Funding Scheme and how to apply.

Note that the Disability Support Form is not the same as a DSA application. The Disability Support Form is an Open University form and the means by which you tell us about your disability and request services from us. A DSA is an external funding scheme to which you will have to make a separate application. Please fill in both forms.

2.2 What to do later

Once these priority tasks are out of the way you're ready to start your study. However, there may be further arrangements to make with us if you're due to attend a residential school (see [Section 5](#)), or for your final assessment or exam (see [Section 6](#)). There is a form to apply for support at residential school, and another to apply for support in your exam or end-of-module assessment.

It can take a while to set up these services, so please start thinking about them once you've settled in to your study routine, and return the forms to us at least eight weeks before you're likely to need the services.

Please note that we do require documentary evidence of your disability or long-term health condition in order to approve changes to exam and assessment arrangements. This may also apply to some other support provision.

2.3 Filling in the disability support forms

If you need help to fill in the forms but have no-one to help you, your student support team can take your details over the phone. They will also be happy to offer advice if you want it.

All three disability support forms are available for students in the StudentHome Help Centre disability section www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/disability-publications-and-forms.

If you'd like to discuss your requirements, please fill in as much of the form as you can and say that you need more advice. Then we'll get in touch with you.

The facilities you can ask for are listed in each form and are largely self-explanatory, but students can see further details online in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) disability section.

How we use the information you give us

Once you have returned the Disability Support Form we'll create a disability profile from the information you provide, which summarises how your disability or specific learning difficulty affects your study. It is confidential and available only to University staff and agents who have a role in making sure your requirements are met, and your tutor.

We will use your profile to help us provide you with study materials, equipment and services, and to plan our services. You have access to your profile and can update the information at any time.

If you are granted a DSA funding award (see [Section 3](#)) we'll ask for your permission to record details of it on your profile. If you decide to ask us to make particular arrangements for an exam we'll need further information and extra documentation from you. Some of this information could be passed to the exam invigilator.

To ensure we mark everyone's work on merit only, we do not pass information about any student's disability to the staff that mark exam scripts or End of Module Assessments. Information about your condition that you've given the University or your tutor will not be brought to the attention of the Module Result Panel. The only information they will have will be that submitted via the special circumstances procedure.

We may provide information about your disability, health condition, mental health difficulty, or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) anonymously as part of our statistical returns to the government. We may also contact you to ask if you would be willing to take part in research.

As is the case with all our students, we may record our phone calls with you to help check that we have carried out your instructions correctly and to help us improve our services through staff training.

3. Disabled Students' Allowance and other funds

3.1 What funds are available?

A **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)** is a government grant available to some disabled UK students in higher education. Eligibility for a DSA is not subject to a means test and being in receipt of a DSA does not affect a student's entitlement to state benefits. However, DSA isn't available to all disabled students and you will need to meet several eligibility criteria in order to be eligible for funding from this external scheme.

If you are eligible for a DSA, it could help you to pay for some of the extra study related equipment and services you have to purchase as a result of your disability. This might include specialist technology, non-medical help (e.g. specialist dyslexia tuition) and extra travel costs.

DSA isn't intended to cover all of your extra disability-related costs and it's not the only source of assistance. Services, such as audio recordings of printed module material, transcripts, comb-bound module texts and electronic module material are provided by the University free of charge.

Also, students who have extra costs that aren't covered by a DSA may be able to apply to the Open University for discretionary funding. Students in England can apply to the **Study Support Fund (SSF)**. This funding is means-tested. Students in Northern Ireland can apply to the OU for the means-tested discretionary funding using the **Support Funds (SF)** application form. The **Financial Contingency Fund (FCF)** provides the same means-tested discretionary funding (from the Welsh government) for students in Wales.

If Student Finance England (SFE) agrees to assist a student with the cost of purchasing a computer, SFE will expect the student to cover the first £200 themselves. Some means-tested funding is available through the SSF to assist students who need to make this £200 contribution.

In Scotland, the Scottish government gives a discretionary fund to universities. Assistance from this fund is means tested and may be available to some students who are not eligible for a DSA.

You cannot get a DSA if you live in the Republic of Ireland, but you can benefit from other support offered by the University, such as the Open University's Equipment Loan Scheme.

Module materials in alternative formats and tutorial, residential school and exam facilities are available to all disabled students. You should use your DSA if you have one (or your support from the discretionary OU schemes or FCF), to pay for professional communication support services and equipment. We will provide them in line with the DSA needs assessment. However, the Disabled Student Services Team may also provide professional communication support and equipment loans while you are waiting for your DSA application to be processed, or if you are not eligible for a DSA or funding from the discretionary OU funding schemes or FCF.

A separate source of support is **The Open University Students' Educational Trust (Ouset)** run by The Open University Students Association. The Fund can help with grants towards module fees, travel and child/dependent care costs associated with placements/tutorials/ residential schools, set books and the purchase, repair or maintenance of essential IT equipment. Any student registered with The Open University is eligible to apply to the Trust, including students studying outside the UK and postgraduate students. The Trust bases their decision on a set of criteria. Any student wishing to apply to the Trust should obtain the application form and the current criteria from www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset.

In addition, some students with restricted mobility or manual dexterity may be able to get some funding support for their module fee via the **Open University's David Godson Disability Award**. For more information on this go to www2.open.ac.uk/study/support/disability/the-support-we-offer.

For more information on financial support, or to check for the most up-to-date information, visit the website www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding or contact the Student Recruitment Team.

The financial support information provided in this booklet is correct at the time of publishing, and the information on discretionary OU schemes and FCF remains relevant for the 2017/18 academic year which runs until 31 July 2018. However the type and availability of support under each funding scheme may vary or change so you are strongly recommended to check

the support available to you with the appropriate funding body. Contact details are provided at the end of this booklet.

3.2 Applying for a DSA

DSA for students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is an external government funding scheme. If you think you might be eligible for a DSA funding award you will need to apply to an external Funding Body.

Not all disabled students will be eligible for extra funding from the government's DSA scheme. However, we encourage all disabled students to take the quiz on our website www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/dsa-eligibility to see if they are likely to be eligible. Please note that the outcome of the quiz is only a guide. You will still need to follow the formal DSA application process to confirm whether you are eligible.

Information on eligibility for a DSA can also be found at <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>.

If you are likely to be eligible for a DSA funding award, the eligibility quiz will give you the details of the DSA funding body you need to apply to. You can also find contact details for the different funding bodies in [Appendix 3](#).

Before you apply to the scheme you will need to register for at least 30 credits in the academic year and these must be linked to a qualification of at least 60 credits. There are also other criteria most of which are covered in the DSA eligibility quiz. For detailed advice on the eligibility criteria, you should contact your DSA funding body directly.

When your funding body receives your completed DSA application form and supporting evidence, they will tell you whether you are eligible for funding from the scheme. If you are eligible, you will be asked to arrange a Study Needs Assessment. This will be funded by the DSA scheme but carried out by an independent agency. It is not a medical, it's simply an opportunity to discuss your disability-related study needs with a Study Needs Assessor.

After your Study Needs Assessment, your assessor will write a report and, with your agreement, will send it to your DSA funding body for consideration. The funding body will tell you which of the recommended purchases listed in the report can be funded by the DSA scheme and which purchases will need to be funded by some other means.

Your funding body can also send a copy of your Needs Assessment Report to The Open University so that we can help set up the disability related support you need. We can also let you know about alternative sources for any items and services recommended in your Study Needs Assessment Report that could not be funded by the DSA funding scheme.

The DSA application process can take up to 14 weeks to complete. Therefore, if you think you might be eligible for a DSA funding award, you should submit a completed DSA application form to your funding body as soon as possible.

Please note that DSA is awarded for one academic year of study at a time. This means that students must apply for their DSA award to be renewed each time they start a new year of study.

DSA for students in Scotland

- The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) is responsible for handling DSA for students in Scotland who meet its residency requirements. SAAS decides what you'll receive and which services will be approved and paid from your DSA.
- To qualify for a DSA you must be studying at least 60 credits in each academic year (September to October), as well as satisfying residency requirements. Full details are given in the guidance notes which accompany the application form.

Contact The OU in Scotland for a DSA application pack and advice about applying. Contact details are in [Appendix 3](#).

DSA awards in Scotland are dealt with by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS); their website provides information and guidance about DSAs and tells you how to apply; www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm

- If you are applying for a DSA for the first time, or you have had a break in your studies or if your disability or learning difficulty has changed, SAAS will send you for an assessment to a Scottish Access Centre where an assessor will assess your study-related needs and recommend support.
- If you require ongoing support from the DSA, you have to complete a new application each year.
- The DSA can pay for small and large items of equipment or can pay for non-medical personal help, and what you receive depends on your individual needs.

3.3 The DSA needs assessment

If your funding body confirms that you're eligible for a DSA funding award, you should visit the DSA Quality Assurance Group www.dsa-qag.org.uk where you can enter your home postcode or that of your university/college to find an assessment centre near you. You should contact the assessment centre of your choice to arrange a needs assessment appointment. The appointment provides you with an opportunity to discuss, in detail, your study needs with a qualified assessor.

The cost of the appointment will be reclaimed from your funding body. You do not need to pay this yourself. The cost covers:

- The needs assessment appointment
- The needs assessment report
- Ongoing support from your assessor during your study.

If you're unable to attend an assessment at an assessment centre you may be able to have the appointment in your home with prior permission from your funding body. Appointments are often available in the evenings and at weekends as well as Monday-Friday during office hours. Speak to your chosen assessment centre for details.

3.4 If you're not eligible for a DSA

If you're not eligible for a DSA or if your allowance does not cover the full amount of assistance required, you may be eligible for support from the discretionary OU funding schemes if you live in England or Northern Ireland or from the Financial Contingency Fund if you live in Wales. These are means-tested funds based on your financial circumstances; your support team can tell you whether you are eligible.

To find out about other funding available in Scotland, please contact The Open University in Scotland – email scotland-support@open.ac.uk.

If you are not eligible for extra funding to cover your additional disability-related study costs, you may be able to borrow certain items of equipment and assistive technology from the Open University. Students who are D/deaf or hard of hearing may be able to receive professional communication support. Please contact Disabled Student Services for information. All disabled students are able to request alternative formats of module material regardless if they are eligible for a DSA or not.

4 Support for your day-to-day study

This section gives an overview of support available during your study if you have a disability or long-term health condition, to help you think about the services you might need.

These are the skills that OU students use and develop during module study:

- Routine study activities such as reading, making notes, listening to audio material, gathering information from DVDs and the internet
- Using a computer and online resources such as module websites and interactive online activities
- Taking part in tutorials and other group study activities such as online forums
- Carrying out practical work at home
- Completing assignments.

You'll also communicate with your support team and cope with your own administration and study planning.

All students develop and adapt study skills to suit their own needs. You'll find some useful advice online on developing study skills at Skills for OU Study on www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/study-skills. There is also a printed book called The Good Study Guide – see [Appendix 1](#) for more details.

You'll probably find some aspects of study more demanding than others. You may want to get further advice from your tutor or your support team.

4.1 Assistive technology

Many disabled students use specialist equipment to study effectively:

- A physically disabled student who cannot use a keyboard or mouse may be able to use a computer for producing written work with the aid of voice-recognition software.
- A blind student who cannot read may be able to listen to printed texts with the aid of a system that converts the printed text into an electronic format that is read out as synthetic speech.
- A student who is hard of hearing may benefit from a room loop or personal radio aid which amplifies sound in a tutorial or when working in a group.

There is an extremely wide range of equipment of this kind, which is generally referred to as assistive technology. You may be able to get this equipment through a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) or the Study Support Fund/Support Fund/Financial Contingency Fund (SSF/SF/FCF; see [Section 3](#)). If you are not eligible for either, you may be able to borrow some of these items from Disabled Student Services, either as a single piece of equipment or as a package (for which you need to provide medical evidence) under the Equipment Loan Scheme.

The Open University Equipment Loan Scheme

The OU runs an equipment loan scheme for students not eligible for a DSA or other funding. You may be able to borrow specialist equipment, assistive technology or ergonomic support (such as adapted items of furniture) under this Scheme.

See [Appendix 3](#) for contact information.

4.2 Working with your tutor

You'll get contact details for your tutor just before the start date of your module, so this is a good time to get in touch and discuss the support they might be able to offer, for example at tutorials, or the best format for you to submit your assignments.

4.3 Routine study activities

Many disabled students find that study takes them longer. You should consider how much time you are likely to need – for example, if you are using an alternative format of your module materials you might have to familiarise yourself with navigating audio files, or using bookmarks and changing text size in electronic text versions.

Reading

Every module has a lot of text, either as printed books or online.

We can often provide printed books with a comb-binding that allows the open book to lie flat (see [Appendix 2](#)), which can be useful if you have problems handling objects, if you have to spend much of your time lying down, or if you use low-vision aids.

"I've got very bad arthritis. Holding books open is painful for me. The comb-bound units have been a great help."

Many modules are available as audio recordings for students who can't use print. These recordings can be used on a computer or other players such as portable DAISY player. Audio could be useful if you are blind or partially sighted, have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, or a physical disability that makes handling books difficult.

Audio–visual material

Many modules make use of short videos presented on the module website, or other activities on a DVD-Rom. Transcripts of the spoken content are usually provided on the module website.

Making notes

Making notes is an important part of successful study. As well as recording the main ideas and facts you'll need for assignments or as part of your revision, it allows you to express your understanding in your own words.

You'll make notes:

- at home as you read module materials and in preparation for an assignment
- as part of a tutorial or study group
- at residential school
- when you are revising for an exam.

You can take notes by:

- writing in a notebook or file, or on index cards
- typing on a computer
- dictating into a recorder
- dictating to someone else
- marking text with a highlighter pen
- writing in the margins of the module units
- underlining text
- adding bookmarks within electronic documents.

“If I take my eyes off the speaker’s face, I really don’t follow what they are saying, so it’s really difficult to take notes. I find I don’t need to take a lot of notes in tutorials and there’s always someone willing to share their notes with me.”

Computing

To study with us you'll need regular and reliable access to the internet and a computer. It's advisable to check the module description at www.open.ac.uk/courses to see the minimum computing requirements. For most modules you'll be expected to spend at least a couple of sessions a week working on computer-based activities and some of this work may be assessed. Many modules present all the teaching material online.

There are many online services, including access to our library and online forums. Each module has a website to help you plan and organise your study, and give access to support from your tutor and fellow students.

Students who are eligible for a DSA or SSF/SF/FCF can sometimes receive funding to buy specialist hardware and software. If you are not eligible for either of these you can discuss your need for hardware and software with Disabled Student Services, who may be able to submit an application to the OU Equipment Loan Scheme (described in [Section 4.1](#)). Supporting medical evidence will be asked for.

4.4 Tutorials and day schools

Tutorials are an optional but valuable part of many modules. Tutorial support can include tutorials online or by phone, or face-to-face group meetings. Face-to-face tutorials usually last about two hours and are held in premises such as a local adult education centre, a university or a further education college.

Some faculties also hold day schools that deal with topics rather than with individual modules. You might then be working with students and tutors you haven't met before, and you might be moving from one group to another. In this way, day schools can be similar to residential schools.

D/deaf or hard of hearing students can request professional communication. You need to apply for DSA or other appropriate funding in order to pay for it. If you are unable to receive funding the OU may provide the support but will ask for supporting evidence. Working with an agent, we can organise for students to receive support for tutorials, day schools or residential schools.

Access to buildings

Access to the buildings we use for tutorials and day schools varies considerably, and although we do try to book buildings with suitable facilities, it isn't always possible. If we know what your requirements are, we can tell you if there's likely to be a problem and discuss alternative arrangements, such as changing tutorial locations, tutorial groups or provide alternative access routes where possible. Please give us details of your access requirements when you complete your Disability Support Form.

The tutorial environment

Tutorials are informal occasions where, with the tutor and other students, you explore aspects of the subject you're studying. This can mean quite a lot of talking, listening, note taking and group activities. The nature of tutorials varies according to the subject matter, but the tutor always spends some time talking to the whole group and answering questions. Ideas or issues are often discussed in small groups, perhaps with a report made to the tutor and the rest of the students. Tutors may use equipment such as whiteboards, presentations using computers, audio or video players and microscopes.

You may have quite straightforward requirements, such as a type of chair, or sitting near the door. [Section 7](#) gives more details of what could be made available. Please let us know when you complete your Disability Support Form so that we can meet your requirements.

Alternatives to face-to-face tutorials

Modules increasingly make use of electronic tutorials using forums, instant messaging or audio conferencing. But if your module has face-to-face tutorials we do understand that it might not be possible for you to attend. Instead, we may be able to arrange some individual tutor sessions over the phone, by email or, in exceptional circumstances, by visiting you at home.

Study groups

The University encourages students to set up informal meetings among themselves to discuss topics related to their studies. Study groups meet in all sorts of places – a spare

room at the tutorial centre, a pub or a student's home. Groups are often set up at tutorials, so if you can't attend, do ask your tutor for details of your nearest group. We will not give your address or phone number to other students unless you tell your tutor that you're happy about this.

Do let your tutor know if you'd like to keep in touch with other students by phone or online. Even if it's impossible to get to tutorials, or if your module doesn't offer them, there's no need for you to feel isolated.

4.5 Home kits

Home kits are an essential part of some modules, particularly for experiments in science and technology. Some of the home experiment work is assessed in assignments.

If there's no-one you could ask to help, you should discuss this with your support team.

4.6 Assignments

During your module your study progress is assessed by tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and possibly computer-marked assignments (CMAs), which are done in your own home. You can take as much time as you need to complete them, as long as you submit them by the due date.

The final assessment in a module is usually by an exam or an end-of-module assessment (EMA), as described in [Section 6](#).

Tutor-marked assignments (TMAs)

TMAs ask you to produce an essay, a project or an experimental report, or to tackle a structured problem. TMAs in language modules also include some assessment of your ability to hear and speak the language. A TMA that is submitted electronically is called an eTMA. All modules use TMAs as part of their assessment. TMAs are usually typed and submitted electronically online but with agreement from your support team it may be possible to present an assignment as a recorded piece of audio.

If you have received DSA funding to assist you with the cost of equipment or support, you may be able to use this to help you to complete your TMAs. If you are not eligible for a DSA and you need specialist help or equipment to complete your TMAs we may still be able to help you via other funding or one of our equipment loan schemes.

- If you find that you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, please remember that this can cause difficulties later in the module as extra time to complete your last assignment after the submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances. It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you to sort out the priorities for your study.
- If you have a timed TMA you may need to ask for additional time to complete this. If you are doing a timed TMA as practice for an exam question, and you have already agreed your exam arrangements with your support team, you should be able to have the same arrangements as you have agreed for your exam. If you have not yet agreed arrangements for your exam, or have any other queries about your timed TMAs, please contact your support team and your tutor to discuss this.

- If you cannot submit your TMA in the way we ask you to for reasons related to your disability (for instance, you are unable to use the eTMA system, or cannot handwrite your assessment) we may be able to arrange for you to submit it in another way. Please ask your support team for advice in good time if you think you might need to submit in a different format.

Computer-marked assignments

Your module may include a computer-marked assignment (CMA) which needs to be completed on paper, or an interactive computer-marked assignment (iCMA) which needs to be completed on a PC.

Computer-marked assignments are provided as paper forms on which you need to mark your answers with a pencil. These are then sent back to the University and a computer is used to read the answers. If you cannot use a pencil and paper, you may need someone to help you fill in the answers on these sheets. This could be a non-medical helper, or perhaps a friend or family member. If you are unable to complete your CMA at all, you should contact your support team for advice.

iCMAs are normally open for several weeks, and you can use any equipment or non-medical help to complete these as you would normally use for your TMAs. iCMAs are also designed to be screen reader accessible, and you can normally complete part of the iCMA, save your answers, and return at a later time to complete it, so you do not need to spend long periods in front of your computer screen.

If you do experience problems completing your iCMA for reasons related to your disability, you should contact your tutor or your support team to ask for help.

Language modules and oral assessments

If you are taking a language module, you may be asked to listen to recordings of the spoken language, participate in online tutorials, or take an oral assessment. If you will have difficulties in completing any of these assessments for reasons related to your disability, we may be able to help.

In some cases, we can offer a transcript of audio materials if you have a hearing impairment and you will need to provide evidence to support your request. If you think you might need this adjustment, you should contact your support team.

If you have a hearing impairment or speak very slowly, we may be able to arrange a one-to-one oral assessment, with extra time to complete your assessment if you need it. You should tell us about this on the support form for exam arrangements (FRF3).

Extensions to cut-off dates

Each assignment has a date by which it should reach your tutor (for TMAs) or Milton Keynes (for CMAs). Your tutor may allow you to submit certain TMAs late, if agreed beforehand. No extensions can be permitted for CMAs.

Extensions are not normally permitted for the final TMA, and the Assessment Handbook gives an absolute final cut-off date for final TMAs. If in exceptional circumstances you require additional time for your final TMA for reasons related to your disability, you can apply to extend your deadline by up to three weeks beyond the original submission date. If this extended deadline falls after the absolute cut-off date for your module, you will need to apply

to Policy Exceptions and Academic Conduct Centre in writing. (This information supersedes information provided in other documentation and applies only to students who have declared a disability to the University.)

Substitution

In case you're not able to submit all your assignments, many modules allow 'substitution'. A representative score, based on the assignments that you have submitted, can replace at least one low (or zero) assignment score, perhaps because you didn't submit the assignment. Your Assessment Handbook gives full details of how a substitution score is calculated and your module guide will tell you exactly how substitution applies to your module. If you think that you won't be able to submit all the assignments, do talk to your tutor. We may be able to be more flexible about how and when you submit assignments if necessary.

5 Support at residential school

If your module includes a residential school you should try to attend if at all possible, because it will cover aspects of your subject that can't be taught at a distance and it may deliver learning outcomes which are essential for a particular qualification.

Before choosing a module that includes a residential school you should think about these points:

- The type of equipment you might need to take with you or borrow from us
- Whether you'll need an assistant.

Once you have started to study a module with a residential school it is important to request the facilities and equipment you may need at the school as soon as you can. You do that by completing and returning the Disability Support Form (Residential School), otherwise known as FRF2, as described in [Section 5.6](#). We will advise you if we do not already hold this. Disabled Student Services will work with you to organise a suitable support provision but you need to tell us about your requirements, **at least eight weeks before your school starts**.

5.1 Equipment for use at residential school

You should bring your own equipment to use during the residential school but it is important to tell the Disabled Student Services about the items before your school starts.

Alternatively, we may be able to loan equipment to you to use while you are at the school – the amount of equipment varies considerably depending on the site, but can include the loan of a scooter, wheelchair, digital voice recorder, bath and shower aids; or facilities for storing medication. Borrowed equipment must be returned to the on-site school office before you leave. Students can find more details in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#).

5.2 Working with tutors at residential school

Make sure that you introduce yourself to your tutors at residential school and take time to discuss and agree a working strategy that will suit you. For example you may want to ask for extra time for an activity; think about where you might like to be located within the teaching room; discuss coping strategies if conditions cause fatigue.

5.3 Bringing an assistant to residential school

Depending on the type of support you need during the school, you may benefit from bringing a personal assistant – a friend or relative who is familiar with your requirements and has a good standard of fitness to support you. Alternatively, we may instead be able to provide someone from our Disability Support Assistant's Register.

An assistant can help you in various ways, for example by:

- taking notes for you
- helping you at mealtimes with carrying trays
- carrying your books and opening doors
- giving you moral support and guidance
- helping you with reading
- helping you in the laboratory
- helping you to get around, both on campus and on field trips
- helping you to use the equipment you have borrowed from us.

Disability Support Assistants have experience in supporting students with a range of requirements. They cannot help with personal care such as washing, dressing, toileting or administering medication. If you need this sort of support you should bring your own personal assistant if at all possible. Otherwise please contact the Disabled Student Services **at least eight weeks before your school starts** to discuss alternative arrangements.

We use several conditions to match students with assistants, including gender, academic knowledge and experience. Most matches work extremely well, and the key to this is good communication. You should try to discuss your requirements fully with your OU supplied assistant beforehand, so you get to know and agree your expectations of one another before you arrive at the school.

"The relationship with my assistant was good. We spoke twice on the telephone before I went to residential school so we both knew something about each other before we met, and set some boundaries for our relationship. At the school everything went well. We went to most tutorials and some social events together, but we also had time apart, which I felt was important".

If you think you'll probably be able to cope on your own for most of the time but you might need support for occasional short periods, we can provide a part-time 'occasional assistant', for example to help you with your luggage, or just at meal times. You must book this type of support in advance with Disabled Student Services.

Don't assume that you will be able to rely on fellow students for help, as it could interfere with their own study. We have the right not to admit you to a school without an assistant if, in our opinion, you need one. If you arrive alone at your school and an assistant can't be arranged quickly, we may ask you to leave. Equally, we have the right not to allow you to have an assistant if there seems no genuine need.

Even if your only requirement is diet specific or a temporary requirement, please let us know.

5.4 Finding out about the school site

You can find specific details about each school site online. This will help you to decide which to choose (if there's a choice) and which facilities you may need.

Your module description also gives details about the residential school in the 'If you have a disability' section. This is an expert view on what to expect during your residential school, including information on any fieldwork trips, additional activities, or additional equipment that may be required. This information will help you consider what type of support you may need at the school.

Unless we tell you otherwise, your accommodation will be a single room and you may have to share a bathroom with other students. Some of our sites also have shared kitchens, but generally meals are taken at the canteen on site.

5.5 If you can't attend

We accept that for reasons beyond their control, some students may find it impossible to go to residential school. Such students may be offered an 'alternative learning experience' (ALE) which delivers the same main learning outcomes as the residential school. Most ALEs involve online activity and some involve written work.

If you do not go to the residential school you must do the ALE instead. You cannot be excused from this part of the module. Details are shown in the module description.

In modules that are described in our publications as 'residential school modules' (those with XR in the module code) the residential school is the major part of the module. They do not have an ALE, so you shouldn't commit yourself to one of these modules without being sure that you will be able to attend the residential school.

Disability is not in itself a reason to opt for an ALE rather than the face-to-face residential school, unless it's impossible to make satisfactory arrangements to meet your needs. We will do all we reasonably can to make it possible for you to go to the school, but we may not be able to do so unless you tell us about your requirements well in advance.

"I got excusal from my first residential school, but when I listened to the other students I wished I had gone. I talked to someone in my support team and she suggested that I might be able to manage with an assistant. In fact I needed two – yes, I tried it and I'm really glad I did. It was hard work but my helpers made it possible".

For some modules the ALE is not a free choice option and an application will have to be made to the module team.

5.6 Making arrangements for residential school

Step 1 – Book your place at a school

Several months before the school is held you'll receive booking information and details of available schools by email or through the post, depending on the contact preferences you have set.

Facilities vary between schools and their sites, so your choice of school may well affect the arrangements you'll need to make, such as whether or not you'll need an assistant or the equipment you want to borrow. Disabled Students Services can advise you on the best site to choose. If you have restricted mobility in particular, it will help us to help you if you tell us about this before you book your place.

You can book your place online in StudentHome. Places are available on a first come, first served basis so please make sure you book early to try and ensure you get your first choice of site and week.

Residential schools accommodation and meals charge

The accommodation charge will cover the cost of accommodation and meals for the duration of the residential school that you are attending. The details of the accommodation and meals to be provided will be set out on the booking page for the residential school that you are attending.

If you are liable to pay this charge you will see this information and the amount within the module description and be made aware during the registration process. To pay this fee or if you have decided to arrange your own accommodation and meals you must contact the Student Recruitment team. Alternatively if you would like to apply to study the alternative learning experience (ALE), if there is one associated to your module, you must contact the Residential Schools team to discuss your options and the process to follow.

Once you have paid the charge for the accommodation and meals we will confirm this with the venue to guarantee these arrangements for you.

Step 2 – Complete the Disability Support Form (Residential School) FRF2 and send it to us

This form is available online or as a print version in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#). You use it to tell us about the facilities and equipment you may need during your residential school.

Before completing the form you should think about the type of equipment, facilities or support you may need during your residential school because of your disability, health condition, mental health difficulty or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia).

If you have been to an OU residential school previously we'll already have the details you supplied then, so you may just have to update the form to show any changes in your requirements. Please include details of any dietary or temporary requirements.

The arrangements are made by staff from Disabled Student Services. Once we have your FRF2 form a member of the team will contact you to go through what you might need in more detail.

Step 3 – Check whether you can get funds to pay for services

Some of the services described here, plus many more that are not, can be paid for by a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) or other funding.

If you are eligible for a DSA the University will only provide study support that cannot be provided by a DSA. The OU provides these services free of charge to students who are not eligible for a DSA. There's more information in [Section 3](#).

Step 4 – Check in advance that everything is ready for you

Disabled Student Services can answer any queries you have and confirm that arrangements have been made. Please contact them promptly if your circumstances change - for example, if you need more or less support than you originally asked for on your FRF2 form.

Make sure to finalise arrangements with any assistant you plan to take and discuss each other's expectations of the support you'll need.

6 Support for your exam or end-of-module assessment

In addition to the assignments that you submit during your study, your module may include a more formal assessment – an exam or end-of-module assessment (EMA).

6.1 End-of-module assessments, projects and portfolios

Some modules have an EMA, project or portfolio rather than an exam. Depending on the requirements of the module, these may be submitted electronically, typewritten or handwritten in ink. Please contact your support team for advice well before the deadline for your EMA if you have a particular requirement, for example:

- if you cannot produce written work, or can't do so independently
- if you cannot submit your work in the specified format (for example, electronically, typewritten or handwritten in ink) for a reason related to your disability
- if you cannot sign the ET3 forms to confirm that the work is your own.

You can use any of the strategies that you would normally use for your TMAs to complete your EMA, project or portfolio, including any assistive software or non-medical help you would normally use. When the Module Results Panel meets to award your results, it will have brief factual details of any additional arrangements or reasonable adjustments we have made for your exam. The script marker is not made aware of any disability or additional requirements that you may have reported to the University, nor of any additional arrangements put in place for you. This is so that the Board has a baseline and independent assessment of the academic merit of the script as presented.

Exams

The Open University recognises that some students are disadvantaged by taking exams under standard conditions. We try to compensate as far as possible for any disadvantage you might experience in taking an exam, so that your work may be assessed on the same basis as that of other students.

We have long experience of making reasonable adjustments to suit students' requirements. We also have rules for allowing extra time and for different methods of recording question papers and presenting exam answers. These rules ensure we assess all students on the same basis. However, where the end-of-module assessment is an exam, you must be assessed under invigilated, time-limited conditions with restricted access to module materials.

Step 1 - Fill in Disability Support Form (Examinations) FRF3

If you need any additional support to complete your TMAs, CMAs, EMA, project or portfolio you should contact your support team as soon as possible.

As it is particularly important that we know about any adjustments you need for exams or language oral assessments, we ask you to tell us about these on the support form for exam arrangements, FRF3. The form is available for students in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) disability section.

Don't worry if you are not able to fill it all in, just fill in what you can and someone from your support team will contact you to discuss your requirements in more detail if necessary.

If you have been awarded a DSA you might want to check the support you have been awarded as you consider what to ask for on this form. You can usually use any DSA funded equipment the DSA has awarded to you to complete your continuous assessment, but you should not assume that you will be able to use all the equipment in your exam.

Step 2 (For exams only) - Return Disability Support Form (examinations) FRF3 to us with documentary evidence to support your request

We can make some adjustments for your continuous assessment, but we cannot authorise any adjustments for your exam until we have documentary evidence from you to support your request.

This evidence (usually in the form of a doctor's letter or certificate, or a diagnostic assessment for specific learning difficulties) must be recent to the date of the exam. If you haven't already sent it to us, please enclose your documentary evidence with your completed FRF3.

Your evidence should state the effects of your disability and how this would make it difficult for you to sit a standard exam. It should also confirm if the effects of your disability are temporary, of uncertain duration, or unlikely to improve.

We are likely to ask to review your evidence periodically to make sure that your adjustments are still meeting your requirements, especially if you are requesting something you didn't need when you started your studies.

You should return your documents quickly and no later than six weeks before your exam period starts, as we cannot guarantee to provide any adjustments if you ask us after this time.

Step 3 (Optional) - If, after your exam or assessment, you think your disabilities or any other circumstances affected your performance, let us know.

When the Module Result Panel meets to award results it will have brief factual details of any reasonable adjustments made for your assessments.

If there were circumstances beyond your control that affected your performance or your preparation, or you think that adjustments made for your assessment weren't suitable for your requirements, you can report the matter to us and the Panel may then take that into account when awarding your result.

You can find more information about reporting special circumstances in the Assessment Handbook, which you can access from your StudentHome at www.open.ac.uk/students, in

the Examination Arrangements booklet, or in the Information for Students Submitting Examinable Work booklets (links to the appropriate booklet will be sent to you towards the end of your module). Please note there are strict time limits on sending in these forms.

6.2 Making reasonable adjustments for an exam

We may contact you to discuss your requirements.

- We will try to find an invigilator for you if you can't come to a main exam centre.
- We may need to prepare question papers in alternative formats.
- We may need to ask for additional approval for the adjustments you have requested.
- About two to four weeks before your exam, we will email or write to you to confirm the arrangements we have made for you.

If your circumstances change in a way that affects the services and facilities you require, please contact your support team immediately so we can update our records.

The question paper

All students have access to a specimen exam paper during their module. This is in the same style as the actual exam paper, and should give you a good idea of what to expect. Your tutor can help if you have questions about the structure of the exam paper for your module.

You might find that a standard question paper would cause you difficulties, either in reading the questions or in recording your answers to them, in which case you may be able to have the paper in a different format. Alternatives include enlarged or coloured papers, Braille or audio format, and word or pdf versions for use with a PC. More detail about the formats we can offer is available to students in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#).

Your answers

Most students write their exam answers by hand, in answer books. If that is not possible for you, please think about how you might be able to produce your answers. The alternatives we can offer include using a computer to produce your answers, asking the invigilator to write for you (as an amanuensis) or recording your answers in audio format. These are described in more detail in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#).

Extra time

Depending on your circumstances, we can allow you extra time to do the exam – either extra working time or rest breaks, or possibly both.

If we agree that you can have extra time to do the exam (either before or after the scheduled time), we will arrange for the invigilator to be there with you during that extra time.

If you need more than three hours of extra time your exam may be split over more than one day. We will take into account the structure of the question paper and your individual circumstances.

Where to take your exam

The location of your exam can depend very largely on the requirements you have identified in your FRF3 support form for exam arrangements as well as the types and availability of different exam centres in your area.

You'll also need to know whether your local exam centre has suitable access and facilities for you, such as public transport, suitable parking, wheelchair access or a lift. Staff in your support team will be able to advise you about this.

In most of our main exam centres, the exams take place in quite large halls with students sitting in rows at individual desks. If you need to use a question paper or a method of answering that could disturb other students, or you might need more than thirty minutes' extra time, it won't be practical for you to take your exam in a main exam hall.

If we can't meet your requirements in a main exam hall but you are able to travel, it may be possible for you to take your exam either in a side room at your local main exam centre or in another suitable location.

If you can't travel or you need to use equipment that can't be moved easily, you may be allowed to sit your exam in your own home, in a special centre such as a hospital or a day centre, or in another suitable venue, such as a relative's home or your workplace.

7. Support for particular disabilities and additional requirements

This section collects together advice and information on services that we've found are often relevant to students with a particular disability or health condition.

7.1 If you are blind or partially sighted

If you're blind or partially sighted your study needs are likely to be mainly to do with reading, taking notes and producing written work. Please refer to [Section 4](#) of this booklet to get an idea of day-to-day study and then think about your likely requirements.

We do sometimes still send out information in print, but you can ask for this to be sent to you in a different format when you complete the Disability Support Form.

We have a booklet 'Studying with little or no sight' which provides detailed study tips for visually impaired students (see [Appendix 1](#) for details).

Module materials and equipment

Audio

The text of many modules is available as audio in DAISY Talking Books (DTBs) which can be played on your computer or a portable DAISY player.

The availability can change, so before you commit yourself to a module, please check the latest details for the accessible module materials or contact your support team before registering to make sure that the recordings you want are available.

If audio is available you will find these on your module website. Students can find more details about the different types of DAISY DTBs at www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/digital-audio-samples, and for the loan of a DAISY player (if you are not eligible for a DSA award or other funding to pay for your own) visit www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/borrowing-small-equipment

PDF files

As an alternative to using audio, Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files of the print module material are available to all students for most modules on the module website. These files are suitable for use on a computer or with assistive technology. PDF files allow you to adjust the text size and background colours. You can use a function in the Adobe reader software or separate software (known as a 'screen reader') to convert text into speech in some modules. However not all PDF files are as accessible as we would like them to be, mainly because of the subject (e.g. maths).

If you're interested in using Adobe PDF files, please tick the 'Electronic text' box in the Disability Support Form, and then if module material isn't available in PDF format on the module website we may be able to send you the relevant files.

Please note that we can't guarantee that electronic material will be available for all parts of your module in the format you want, or that it will be fully accessible, although we will do our best to meet your wishes.

Other file types

Increasingly, other electronic file types, such as ePub and Word, are becoming available to all students via the module website.

Braille

Braille is a useful and flexible format for some people and, as well as producing exam papers and labels in this format, we can also produce Braille versions of key study materials. Please note, however, that we need several months' notice to provide this service and so you should discuss this well in advance with your support team.

Large print

We may also be able to provide large print versions of your module material and 'enlarged-print' exam papers (the text is magnified to fit on A3 paper) for all modules. We will need to discuss how we can meet your requirements, so please talk to your support team well in advance.

Equipment

You might want to use low-vision aids, such as magnifying devices, for study at home or at tutorials. However they are tiring to use for very long so it might be helpful to have audio material as well.

Tutorials

If you have face-to-face tutorials, think about travel to the tutorial centre and finding the room. Discuss your requirements both with your tutor and, if possible, with the other students in the group, who are usually very helpful.

Your tutor should be able to provide you with hand-outs, in advance, in your preferred format, such as electronic or large print. Ask your tutor to read out text from the whiteboard.

You may be able to make an audio recording of what is said at a tutorial or residential school, but please remember that the content of an oral lecture remains the property of the University so you should discuss this with your tutor beforehand.

Some students also like to use recorded audio as a means of note-taking, both for ongoing study and revision. There are several kinds of recording devices that can be used, including a digital voice recorder. Eligible students can sometimes receive a DSA funding award to go towards buying this kind of equipment. If you are not eligible for a DSA, you may be able to borrow equipment by requesting 'Equipment' on the Disability Support Form.

Assignments

Many blind or partially sighted students find that studying takes a lot of time because of the large amount of reading. If you find that you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, this may lead to difficulties later in the year as extra time to complete your last assignment after the final submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you to sort out ways of prioritising your study.

It is standard practice to present your assignments in electronic form. Exceptionally, with the agreement of your support team, you may be able to present work as a recording on audio file.

Residential school

If you are blind or partially sighted your needs at residential school are likely to include:

- Taking notes
- Working with text
- Producing written work
- Finding your way around the site
- Assistance at mealtimes.

It's important that you find out how much of your module's residential school text can be provided in a suitable form. The printed text of most modules is available either in audio, as a PDF file or another electronic format. The PDF files can be accessed with screen reading or magnification technology. Contact your support team for more information.

We may be able to provide you with an assistant to read and take notes for you, or a digital voice recorder to record seminars and discussions. Other equipment and services may also be available. You can find out more about what can be provided by contacting Disabled Student Services.

Exams

If your module includes an exam you can ask for an audio or a Braille version of your exam paper. However, you do need to specifically request this even if you have received your module materials in audio or Braille.

If necessary, we may be able to provide readers and scribes for exams, as long as you give us enough notice.

7.2 If you are D/deaf or hard of hearing

In this booklet we have used the term D/deaf to mean:

- deaf people who use a signed or visual language as their preferred language – usually British Sign Language (BSL) or Signed Supported English (SSE); they may have acquired deafness early in life;
- deaf or hard of hearing people who use a spoken language as their preferred language and who may have become deaf later in life.

If you're D/deaf or hard of hearing, your needs will mainly be to do with effective communication between you and your tutor and other students, particularly at tutorials, residential schools and exams.

Most of our communication with students is by email.

We have produced the booklet *Studying when you are D/deaf*, which provides detailed information and tips on studying for students who are D/deaf or hard of hearing; see [Appendix 1](#) for details

Module materials and equipment

Most modules provide transcripts of their audio and video materials in the form of an electronic text on the module website or within the module material that is sent to you, for example on a module DVD.

If you're interested in using transcripts, please tick the 'Transcript' box on the Disability Support Form so that if the transcripts are not available on the module website (or included in a standard module material mailing), Disabled Student Services will send them to you.

Tutorials, day school and residential school

If your module has online tutorials you should discuss the support your tutor can offer so you can take an active part.

At face-to-face tutorials, discuss your requirements both with your tutor and, if possible, with the other students, who are usually very helpful. Ask your tutor to provide notes to you in advance so you know what will be covered. During the session ask the tutor to write as much as possible on the whiteboard and make use of the text facility instead of audio if this helps you take part in discussions. Your tutor may be able to give you electronic versions or photocopies of tutorial notes and slides to save you taking notes.

You may have to encourage your tutor to look at you when speaking, and to summarise verbal contributions from other students. It can be quite difficult for tutors to remember your needs while concentrating on the topic, so don't be afraid to remind them or to ask for an explanation if you have missed something. It will help all students, not just you, if the tutor writes key words on the board as they come up.

Not all tutorial rooms have built-in induction loops. If you wear a hearing aid that has a T-switch, you may find a radio aid very helpful. They're portable, so you can take them to any event. You need to give the microphone and transmitter to the speaker, so in tutorials this may mean passing the microphone around the group, although most radio aids come with multi-directional conference microphones. Placed on a table or other suitable flat surface in

the centre of a seated group, they should pick up what different speakers say without having to be passed around.

If you have a DSA or other funding you may be able to use it to buy a radio aid, or other equipment for your hearing and communication needs. If you are not eligible for a DSA or other funding we may be able to lend you this equipment, subject to supporting medical evidence. Please request 'Equipment' on the Disability Support Form.

We run a scheme with Action on Hearing Loss to provide trained communication support staff for face-to-face tutorials, day schools and residential schools. The support includes sign-language interpreters (BSL or SSE), lip speakers, note takers and, if available, speech-to-text operators. Note takers write a summary of what's being said so you can read it as it happens. They don't make study notes for you. They provide a communication service for people who cannot use other kinds of communication support. The scheme provides communication services for all students regardless of funding, subject to supporting medical evidence and recommendations from Study Needs Assessments. If you have a DSA or other funding award that has approved this kind of support, it will be charged to your allowance.

Assignments and exams

It's in your interest to make sure that your written English is acceptable for assessment purposes. If BSL is your first language and you think that you'll be at a disadvantage in a written exam, we will be sympathetic. If you have a DSA award you should check whether it could fund appropriate support.

If you find that you are getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, please remember that this can cause difficulties later in the year as extra time to complete your last assignment after the submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you sort out the priorities for your study.

Very occasionally, it may be possible to hold exams in BSL. Your support team can also help you to fill in the Special Circumstances form asking the Module Result Panel to take account of this when awarding your module result. If you're concerned about this aspect of your studies, please discuss it with your support team.

7.3 If your mobility is restricted

If your mobility is restricted, your needs relating to study with the OU will relate mainly to access to buildings and rooms.

Most of the places you'll visit for tutorials, residential schools, exams and graduation won't belong to us. Some of the institutions we use for these events are not as accessible as we would like them to be.

Tutorials and day schools

If your module has face-to-face rather than online tutorials you will be provided with details of your tutorial centre, including information about parking and access to the building and the facilities inside it. Some tutorial centres have parking spaces reserved for disabled students.

If you have a DSA or other funding, you may be eligible for an award to cover the extra cost of travel to and from a tutorial, day school or residential school, if the extra cost is as a result of your disability.

It's sometimes possible to book particular rooms, or arrange a more convenient centre for you. Otherwise we may be able to arrange tutorials over the phone, by email or, in exceptional situations, visit you at home.

Please get your tutor to ask the OU about alternative arrangements. It may be possible to arrange for another tutor to help, if necessary.

Residential school

If your mobility is restricted, your concerns at residential school will probably be to do with access to buildings and rooms around the site. Residential schools that include visits or fieldwork may be able to offer suitable alternatives.

"I've been to two undergraduate residential schools. The first year I had a wheelchair and was supported by an assistant. I was also able to use the campus transport, a 'people carrier', for longer distances. The second year I was able to use a scooter, as the site was relatively flat and compact, and I was more independent".

Access at residential schools differs from one site to another. You can also find information about the schools from the detailed module descriptions on www.open.ac.uk/courses. You can discuss your requirements with a member of Disabled Student Services who will be able to organise support for you.

When choosing a site, make sure you know the answers to the following questions.

- What are the distance between teaching, residential and catering accommodation?
- Are there any slopes that make access difficult?
- Are there obstacles, such as split level walkways, that are unmanageable in a wheelchair and difficult on foot?
- Do I need to bring a car?
- Do I need an assistant?
- Is there campus transport?
- Is there adapted accommodation suitable for wheelchair users?

Please note that we do not own any of the sites we use for residential schools and some are not as accessible as we would like. We do work with host sites to improve facilities, and most students with restricted mobility can go to most of the sites we use.

Most of the sites have some accommodation adapted for wheelchairs, which may include an adapted bedroom with en-suite facilities or a separate adapted bathroom. Some sites also have adapted suites with kitchen and dining areas.

All the sites we use have dining areas that are accessible to wheelchair users, although routes may not be as direct as for other students. Staff at the school will make sure, if

possible, that the teaching programme takes place in tutorial rooms, laboratories and lecture theatres that have wheelchair access.

It may be possible to arrange a parking space near the rooms you'll be using to keep your journeys as short as possible.

Electric scooters can usually be arranged, but not all sites are suitable for them. If you would like to borrow an electric scooter during your residential school, please contact Disabled Student Services **at least eight weeks before your school starts**.

Think in advance about whether you'll need an assistant at residential school. You may, for example, need someone to push your wheelchair all or part of the time. An assistant can make sure that there's space in rooms for you to manoeuvre or for a mobility aid, and negotiate the queues for you at mealtimes. You could arrange for a friend or relative to accompany you to the school.

Assignments and exams

We can make arrangements for your exam so that you can cope with any physical discomfort. If you are likely to need other arrangements, it is important that you discuss them with us well in advance.

7.4 If your manual skills are restricted

If your manual skills are restricted, your requirements will be mainly to do with written work, handling books and using equipment.

Module study and equipment

Many of our module books have a stiff binding and don't open flat, so you might find it useful to use the comb-bound alternative. The books are bound with a wire comb-like binding that allows them to lie flat when opened. This is particularly useful for people who have manual pain, have the use of only one hand, or who need to scan the material. We can provide comb-binding for most modules that have printed books – see [Appendix 2](#) for further details. If you request comb-bound versions of your module material you will receive these instead of the standard books.

Instead of making separate notes as you study, you might find it easier and quicker to use coloured highlighter pens to mark the important points in the module material, or make your own audio notes. If you have difficulty in writing, if you already have a computer but find using the keyboard difficult, or if you have a lot of pain, a DSA or other funding may be able to cover the costs of buying special equipment and software to help with written work. If you are not eligible for either of these types of funding, discuss your requirements with your support team, who, if appropriate, may make an application on your behalf to the University's Equipment Loan Scheme (described in [Section 4](#)). Alternatively, they may be able to suggest other ideas as sometimes quite low-tech items can provide the solution.

If you have a DSA or other funding, you may be eligible for an award to cover the cost of voice recognition software (to write from your dictation). In the long-term, you should work towards producing your assignments in printed or electronic form. However, it may be possible with the agreement of your tutor to submit work as a recording on audio file.

It's possible to get equipment through a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) but if you are not eligible for a DSA, you may be able to borrow certain types of equipment by requesting it on the Disability Support Form.

Tutorials

In face-to-face tutorials you could ask another student to make photocopies of their notes, or you could take a portable recorder. There are several kinds of recording devices that can be used, including a digital voice recorder. However, the University is making more use of online tutorials which may make participation easier.

If you want to record a tutorial or any part of it, please remember that the content of an oral lecture remains the property of The Open University so you will have to follow certain procedures. You should discuss this with your tutor before the tutorial.

Assignments and exams

Most modules expect assignments to be typed and submitted electronically. You'll need to consider how you will produce clearly written essays in a reasonable time, perhaps by using specialist software. We can provide a scribe for exams if you need one, but not for assignments, so you may need to make arrangements for a friend or relative to help.

If you produce work very slowly and can't complete an assignment on time, you can ask your tutor for permission to submit it a few days late. However, please remember that this can put you behind for the rest of the module and extra time to complete your last assignment after the final submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you prioritise your study.

If you're likely to need exam arrangements such as extra time, rest breaks, a scribe or a computer, we'll ask you to provide documentary evidence to support your request. You should try to use the same method of producing written work for exams as you use for assignments. Where that isn't possible, you should get some practice beforehand. If you need a scribe, we can organise practice sessions before the exams so that you can get used to this way of working.

Residential school

If your manual skills are restricted your requirements at residential school will probably be mainly to do with:

- written work
- handling equipment
- practical work, such as in a laboratory.

You may use a laptop at home for taking notes and writing essays. If you cannot bring this to residential school with you, we may be able to provide you with a digital voice recorder, so that you can type or write up your notes later. Students can find out more about the range of equipment available for loan in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#). Please contact Disabled Student Services to discuss your requirements.

Do consider in good time whether you need an assistant to help you at residential school, for example with activities such as laboratory work, practical exercises and field trips as well as getting around the school site and using its facilities. If you decide that you need a personal

assistant, tell your support team. It is best if you can arrange for a friend or relative (who is aware of your requirements and who is physically fit) to accompany you while you are at the school.

Please try to take any equipment you need to the residential school with you. However if this is not possible, Disabled Student Services may be able to loan items for you to use at the school.

7.5 If you have a specific learning difficulty

We use the term 'specific learning difficulty' (SpLD) to cover a range of learning difficulties, and place the emphasis more on the differences in the way you learn and the strategies you use rather than on difficulties.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or attention deficit disorder your needs will be to do with processing information – something you have to do a lot as a student. Some students don't tell us about their specific learning difficulty because of bad experiences they've had with learning in the past. Please be assured that we'll try hard to offer you the flexibility and services you need to study effectively.

There are many more suggestions and a lot of advice in our publication 'Studying with dyslexia' which you can download from www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/disability or www2.open.ac.uk/study/support/disability, or you can request a copy from your student support team.

The service and support we can provide depends on your specific learning difficulty and how it's likely to affect your studies. You'll probably know from your previous learning experiences what works for you. A diagnostic assessment carried out by an experienced professional (a qualified psychologist or teacher with a practising certificate experienced in working with adults with specific learning difficulties) will provide a report as evidence of your specific learning difficulty and will identify strategies and tools to fit your study needs.

If you apply for a DSA you will need to submit a diagnostic assessment report to your funding body. You should contact your funding body for advice on the current DSA regulations before you arrange a diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostic assessments for Specific Learning Difficulties can't be funded by the DSA scheme. Your support team can tell you how to get an assessment and advise on how it can be paid for. If you already have an assessment, ask your support team whether it's acceptable or whether you need a new one.

Module materials and equipment

Many students with dyslexia have difficulty with the large amounts of text in our modules.

A considerable number of OU modules are delivered online or have the printed module materials on the module website as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. This electronic text can be manipulated on a computer allowing you to adjust the text size and background colours or with software to convert the text into speech in some modules. Unfortunately, not all electronic text is as accessible as we would like it to be (mainly because of the subject, e.g. maths).

If you're interested in using Adobe PDF files, please tick the 'Electronic text' box on the Disability Support Form so that, if for some reason, the module material is not available in pdf format on the module website, the Disabled Student Services team will send you the relevant files. Please note that we can't guarantee that electronic material will be available for all parts of your module in the format you want or that it will be fully accessible, although we will do our best to meet your wishes.

If you find that it helps to hear the words, you should also think about using audio versions of module material. The printed texts of many modules are available as audio in DAISY Digital Talking Books (DTBs) format which can be played on your computer or portable DAISY player. Many students with dyslexia find it useful to play the recordings as they read the text, or listen to the recordings first and then read the text, or it can be helpful to listen to the recordings to clarify parts of the text.

If audio is available you will find these on your module website. Students can find more details about the different types of DAISY DTBs at www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/digital-audio-samples, and for the loan of a DAISY player (if you are not eligible for a DSA award or other funding to pay for your own) visit www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/borrowing-small-equipment.

Alternatively contact your student support team to make sure that the recordings you want are available.

Writing, spelling and getting ideas in a logical order can all be helped by using computers and appropriate software. If you have a DSA or other funding, money may be available to buy appropriate software or equipment. Otherwise we may be able to provide you with suitable software or equipment through the OU Equipment Loan Scheme (see [Section 4](#)) or in other ways. Ask your support team for advice.

Tutorials

In face-to-face tutorials, you could ask another student to make photocopies of notes, or you could take a portable recorder and record your own notes. It is also possible to record what is said at a tutorial or residential school, but please remember that the content of an oral lecture remains the property of the University, so you will have to follow certain procedures. You should discuss this with your tutor before the tutorial.

Try to discuss your learning strategies with your tutor at the beginning of your module so that he or she knows how to help you. For example, arranging an occasional individual tutorial might be useful.

Assignments

If you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, please remember that this can cause difficulties later in the year as you could be pushed for time later and extra time to complete your last assignment after the final submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). Rather than fall behind, it would be better to get some advice from your tutor.

Residential school

You'll be reading new material without the flexibility of taking all the time you need that you have at home. Residential school programmes tend to be very full and take advantage of the

limited time that you're there. So, any preparation that you can do beforehand will be very useful.

Do consider whether you are likely to need extra support at residential school – perhaps by bringing an assistant with you to take notes, or arranging to have rest breaks. You will need to discuss any arrangements with your support team well before you go to your school.

If you usually use recorded module materials, you're likely to find them helpful for residential school too. A digital voice recorder to record notes or parts of tutorials or lectures might be useful. You'll need to be selective about what you record, as you won't have time to listen to everything again. You're unlikely to need to produce written work yourself, as most of the activities are in groups, so if you usually need a computer for written work you'll probably find that it isn't necessary at the school.

If you find colour coding helpful, remember to take coloured highlighter pens and stickers with you. If you are likely to find it difficult to take notes, you could bring carbon paper so that you can have copies of notes made by other students. If you use coloured acetates for studying at home, you will probably find it useful to bring some to the school.

Students can find out more about the range of equipment available for loan in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) disability section. Please contact Disabled Student Services to discuss your requirements.

Exams

If you're likely to need particular exam arrangements, such as extra time, rest breaks, a scribe or a computer, we'll ask you to provide documentary evidence to support your request. You should try to use the same method of producing written work for exams as you use for assignments, but if that isn't possible try to get some practice beforehand.

If you need a scribe, we can organise practice sessions before the exams so you can get used to this way of working. You may be able to have an audio recorded version of the question paper as well as the printed version.

7.6 If you have a mental health difficulty

Most of our tutors have a great deal of experience in supporting adult students and will work with you to provide the tutorial support you need. If you are eligible to apply for a DSA or other funding, you may be entitled to the support of a specialist helper.

Good mental health plays an important part in studying for all students and it can be particularly stressful if you are experiencing mental health difficulties as it may not be easy to define or predict how your studies might be affected. You might be taking medication that affects your concentration, or there may be other significant side effects that mean you need to take a flexible approach to studying.

Tutorials

If you have concerns about working in a group situation, you may want to take a friend or family member with you to face-to-face tutorials. Or you may prefer not to go to tutorials at all and receive extra telephone, email or one-to-one support from your tutor. Many modules now have online tutorials instead of face-to-face ones.

Assignments

Your support team can help you consider what it's like to study with us and the type of support you can expect. For example, you may need some flexibility with assignment deadlines if your disability makes it difficult for you to produce work on time.

Residential school

Residential schools are intensive and can be particularly demanding both academically and socially, especially if you're not used to being away from home. There may be up to 200 other students involved (70 to 110 for business schools), although you'll be working in much smaller groups of, say, about 10 to 12 people.

Where your module has a residential school, you might prefer to take a friend who can support you during the week, or we may be able to arrange an assistant for you. For assistants supplied by the OU, supporting medical evidence will be required if the cost of the assistant cannot be paid for by DSA or other funding. It might also be helpful to talk to a friend, relative, doctor or community worker who knows how unfamiliar situations might affect your mental health and help you to get the best out of the support we offer.

You'll need to take some time to think about the strategies you could use and the support you might need at residential school. You will be in unfamiliar surroundings, with a new timetable and meeting different people. These have an effect on all students. We recommend that you talk it over with your support team and discuss what might be available to you.

Students and staff at undergraduate schools eat together in a dining area. You'll have a small bedroom to yourself, usually close to a bath/shower room or with en suite facilities and sometimes a small kitchen. Business school sites are usually in hotel or conference-type facilities, offering dining facilities and en suite bathrooms.

Students sometimes find the school more stressful than they expected. If you feel that way, please speak to the Learning Adviser, School Director or Residential School Support Manager (RSSM) at the school, who will be able to offer advice about the options available to you.

Exams

At exam time, you may find sitting in a large exam centre a very daunting prospect, in which case you could ask for an exam at home or in another familiar environment.

These are just a few examples of the kind of support we can offer to students with a mental health difficulty. When you register for study, you will have the opportunity to discuss your specific needs further with one of our advisers.

7.7 If you have a speech impairment

If you have a condition that affects your speech, your requirements will be mainly to do with communication with your tutor and with other students, particularly at tutorials and residential schools. At other times you'll be able to communicate either by letter or email if you want to, but your tutor may choose to phone you so we suggest that you make it clear how you would prefer to be contacted.

All OU tutors have email. You'll be able to communicate with your tutor and other students by email or online forums.

Tutorials and residential school

Some modules have face-to-face tutorials but most have them online. You don't have to take part but we recommend that you do as they are an important learning experience. You might like to consider contacting your tutor beforehand to explain what would help you and give an idea of how you manage in other, similar situations.

You will have developed your own ways to communicate, and it's important to continue to use them. For example, don't worry about speaking slowly. Your speech will probably seem much slower to you than it really is, and it will give other people time to think about what you're saying and about their own responses. Do be confident about asking people to be helpful and not to finish your sentences for you. Most of our students are very considerate.

If you don't feel able to go to face-to-face tutorials, it may be possible for your tutor to send you copies of tutorial materials, or to give you an individual tutorial or extended correspondence tuition. Please let us know what's best for you, and we'll try hard to meet your requests.

7.8 If you have other disabilities or health conditions

If you have a condition that is not specifically mentioned in the previous sections, such as angina, asthma, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV, ME or multiple sclerosis, you may not consider yourself to have a disability, but you could have particular needs to do with your studies or at residential school and should let us know so we can discuss what is available.

If fatigue, pain or medication affect your studies, your tutor or your support team can advise you about the best way to cope.

If you're ill and not able to study for a while, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to give up the module. We work out continuous assessment scores in such a way that you don't need to pass every assignment. We'll help you decide on the best course of action. It's sometimes possible to arrange some extra tuition, a tutorial over the phone, or a home visit.

Your tutor should be able to help you to focus on the essential parts, or suggest parts of the module you can skim through.

Please let staff and fellow students know what to do if there's any possibility of you experiencing severe asthma or an epileptic seizure and, in particular, whether you will need medical help. Most people are very supportive, particularly if they know what to do.

Don't forget that you may be eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to help you with the extra costs of study that you incur because of your disability. There is further information in [Section 3](#).

Tutorials

Most modules now have online tutorials, but if your module has face-to-face ones and you are unable to attend them, it might be possible to arrange individual sessions instead.

Residential school

A residential school may create situations that don't pose any problem at home or at work. For example, you may have:

- religious beliefs that make it difficult for you to attend on certain days
- dietary requirements
- a temporary requirement because of an injury or because you are pregnant.

Let us know about your requirements and we should be able to meet them. We may be able to arrange for you to:

- arrive late or leave early
- have a specially prepared diet
- borrow equipment
- use the campus transport that some sites offer
- arrange for your accommodation to be close to all amenities.

Students can find out more about support at residential school in the StudentHome Help Centre [disability](#) section.

If you are going to the residential school you might want to consider whether it would help to take an assistant.

If you need equipment at a residential school it is preferable to bring your own. Where this is not possible you can borrow equipment from the OU but you will need to tell Disabled Student Services what you need **at least eight weeks before the start of your school**. You can see what equipment is available to borrow by reading the [residential schools](#) section on StudentHome.

Exams

If you think that the three-hour exam will be difficult to cope with, we may be able to arrange for you to take it at home with rest breaks and perhaps extra time.

If you require changes to the usual arrangements for exams, we'll ask you for written, third party evidence of your disability and the effects it has that mean you need extra services.

7.9 If you are pregnant or breast feeding

If you are pregnant or breast feeding whilst a student your needs or adjustments are likely to be around attending a residential school, a face to face tutorial or sitting an exam.

You are strongly encouraged to attend face to face residential schools and we will try wherever possible to make suitable arrangements. For example providing a private space to feed your baby or facilities to keep baby milk refrigerated and secure as well as arranging suitable breaks during the teaching programme for you to feed your baby.

Additional exam arrangements may be possible if your due date is within four weeks of the exam, you have a pregnancy-related illness, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

You can get more information at:

www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/pregnancy-and-parenthood

www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/caring-responsibilities-pregnancy-and-your-examination

Appendix 1: Useful publications

Most of these publications are available in an audio version, or can be downloaded in PDF from www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/disability-publications-and-forms.

Please contact our Student Recruitment Team to ask for a copy.

Title	Description
Studying with dyslexia	A resource for students, providing tips and advice on studying
Studying and staying mentally healthy	A booklet offering suggestions and advice for study strategies
Studying with little or no sight	A guide for blind and partially-sighted students providing tips and advice on studying. Also available on audio through the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Studying when you are D/deaf	A guide for deaf and hard-of-hearing students providing tips and advice on studying
The good study guide by Andy Northedge	Available from the Open University Students Association .

Appendix 2: Alternative formats of module material

OU modules are delivered in a variety of formats that may already be accessible to you, such as print, online or audio-visual (with transcripts or subtitles), PDF (Portable Document Format), ePub or Word files. You will be able to access most of these from your module website. Additionally we offer material in one or more of the following formats:

- Comb-bound
- DAISY digital talking book
- Some transcripts (those not available on the module website)
- Some PDF files (those not available on the module website).

When a module is shown as being available in a comb-bound format, it does not necessarily mean that **all** parts of the module will come with a comb-binding. As a guide, we do not normally put comb-binding on books with fewer than 85 pages unless they are particularly difficult to handle. If you do find a book hard to handle, you can ask for a comb-bound version to be made for you. If you have asked for comb-binding on your materials, you will not be sent a standard version of the books as well – only the comb-bound version.

Most transcripts are available from the module website or DVD. Disabled Student Services will send you a printed copy if the transcripts are not available in this way or if you have a disability-related reason why you can't use them.

For most modules with printed material, there will be Adobe PDF or other electronic text versions of the main module material on the module website. Disabled Student Services will only provide PDF files for material that is not available in this way. We cannot guarantee that all material will be available or fully accessible, especially if the files have come from external publishers.

If you need any of the materials listed, please ask your support team to confirm what is available before you commit yourself to registering for a module. You should also discuss with them as early as possible if you are likely to need any of your study material in large print or Braille or if you are likely to have difficulty using online study materials, as well as your future study requirements.

Additional alternative format module materials are created by Disabled Student Services and your DAISY material may not arrive until after the standard module mailing, which is dispatched from the warehouse. With the exception of comb-bound material, even if you have requested an alternative format, you will still receive the standard mailing.

Appendix 3: Contact details

Students: Please contact your student support team as listed on your StudentHome page.

Enquirers: for all initial contact about modules, the range of support available and how to get that support:

Student Recruitment

Phone: +44 (0)300 303 5303

Monday to Friday 08:00 to 20:00, Saturday 09:00 to 17:00 UK time

Email from our website at www.open.ac.uk/contact

Disabled Student Services

Staff in the Disabled Student Services arrange the specific support you may need during your studies, for example module materials in alternative formats, communication support and equipment loans. They also arrange specific support, equipment or dietary requirements you may need at residential school.

Phone: 01908 653 745

Email: disabled-student-services@open.ac.uk

Website: www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/disability

Student Fees

Phone: 01908 653 411

Email: studentfees@open.ac.uk

Open University Students' Association

Phone: 01908 652 026

Email: ousa@open.ac.uk

Website: www.open.ac.uk/ousa

Residential Schools and Auxiliary Aids and Services Team

Contact the Residential Schools Team to book or amend your place at residential school.

Phone: 01908 653 235

Email: residential-schools@open.ac.uk

Website: www.open.ac.uk/residential-schools

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

For students in England

Student Finance England

Phone: 0300 100 0607

Email: dsa_team@slc.co.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england

For students in Wales

Student Finance Wales

Phone: 0300 200 4050

Email: sfw_dsa_team@slc.co.uk

Website: <http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk>

For students in Northern Ireland

Student Finance NI

Phone: 0300 100 0077

Email: DSA in Northern Ireland is administrated by local Education Authorities. To find the email address for your Education Authority, please visit the 'contacts' page of their website.

Website: www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

For students in Scotland

Email: scotland@open.ac.uk (put your PI number in the subject box)

Phone: 0131 226 3851 (Monday to Friday 9:00 to 17:00 UK time)

Website: www.open.ac.uk/scotland

DSA awards in Scotland are dealt with by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS); their website provides information and guidance about DSAs and tells you how to apply.

Website: www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm

Phone: 0300 555 0505

Email through webform: www.saas.gov.uk/contactUs/go.jsp