

## Frequently Asked Questions about Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

### **Q. What is Disabled Students Allowance?**

“Disabled Students' Allowances provide extra financial help if you have an impairment, health condition (including mental health conditions) or a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia. They are paid on top of the standard student finance package and don't have to be repaid”.

You do not get paid extra money but the money allocated can fund note takers, pay for equipment, none medical help or travel costs.

For more information please go to [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas) or email [Disability@worc.ac.uk](mailto:Disability@worc.ac.uk) .

### **Q. What constitutes a “disability”?**

A lot of students are not aware that their difficulties qualify as a ‘disability’ which would make them eligible for support. The Equality Act (2010) replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) in providing protection and legal rights for disabled people. It uses the following definition of disability:

*“The Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term (i.e. has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months) adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”*

### **Q. What types of diagnosis do the Counselling and Mental Health Team work as a specialist mentor for?**

Below is a list of some of the most common diagnosis that students claim DSA for, this list is not extensive list:-

- Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- OCD
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis
- Schizophrenia
- Personality Disorders
- Bi-polar disorder
- Neuro developmental conditions such as ADHD and Social Communication disorders such as Asperger’s syndrome and Autistic Spectrum Disorder, sematic pragmatic disorder.

For more information about DSA and eligibility please go to <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>.

### **Q. When should I apply for DSA?**

It is best to apply for DSA prior to starting your course or as soon as you have started your course. Though when your course starts you can apply up to nine months into your study. To apply after this time frame you will need to have exceptional circumstances as to why you are making an application.

### **Q. How do I arrange an initial appointment with my specialist mentor?**

At the University of Worcester The Counselling and Mental health team are able to act as a Specialist Mentors for students who have this provision as part of their DSA requirements.

If you have been allocated a Specialist Mentor, then to access this service you would need contact [cmh@worc.ac.uk](mailto:cmh@worc.ac.uk) and ask to arrange an appointment for specialist mentoring. .

### **Q. So I have a specialist mentor but what do they do?**

Specialist Mentors provide support and advice which facilitates self-management of a mental health difficulty or other chronic condition.

Mentors aim to help students with their study, by helping them overcome barriers to success, to provide them with a more equal chance of achieving both academic and personal goals.

They can provide this support by helping with timetabling, goal-setting, and managing self-imposed expectations about appropriate levels of study. Mentors can also help students come to terms with their diagnosis and the effect that this diagnosis may have on their life in general and academia.

Mentoring sessions tend to be more practical than traditional talking therapy. Though all of our mentors are qualified Mental Health Nurses or Qualified Counsellors.

### **Q. What can I expect from my Specialist Mentor?**

From your Specialist Mentor at the University of Worcester you can expect a professional and high quality service. The mentoring service is confidential. Depending on your DSA requirements your Mentor can see you for up to an hour once or twice a week. If you are at risk of going over your allocated hours your mentor is able to speak to the disability advisors to see if they can go back to the needs assessor for more hours. If at the same time you are not using your hours or feel you no longer require mentoring then you are not obliged to attend, though you would however lose the Specialist Mentoring provision.

### **Q. What is the difference between Mentoring and Study Skills tuition?**

So as to not get confused Mentoring is not the same as Study Skills Tuition, which some students with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia and dyspraxia) may require. Study Skills tuition will focus entirely on academic work and a study skills tutor will have a greater understanding of course demands and be able to proof read work. Some students are allocated both study skills tuition and mentoring through their DSA. Instead what a Specialist Mentor can do in terms of study will be to help students develop more effective study such as strategies if they are struggling with organisation, motivation, time management, and staying focussed on their work.

### **Q. What will my mentor commit to?**

Your mentor will usually aim to arrange appointments so that they take place on the same day and at the same time each week, although there may be some flexibility around this and it is always best to discuss this with your mentor.

Your mentor will tell you how you can contact them outside session times (e.g. telephone, email). They may not always be able to return calls or emails immediately but will explain during the first session when they are contactable and the likely timeframe for response.

Your mentor will always try to give you at least 24-hours' notice if they need to cancel an appointment. In some situations when this is not possible (e.g. due to sudden/unexpected illness) they will notify you at the earliest possible opportunity and reschedule for another time.

There will be opportunities to review how things are going with your mentor throughout the semester.

### **Q. What do we expect our students to commit to?**

We expect all students to:

- Keep appointments and turn up on time,
- Sign a timesheet at the end of each session,
- Try and give, when possible, at least 24 hrs hours' notice if you are unable to attend a session.

If you regularly fail to turn up for or have to cancel pre-arranged mentoring sessions within 24 hours, your funding body may not be prepared to continue providing you with support. In this situation your mentor will review with you (in collaboration with your Disability Advisor) whether it is feasible or appropriate to continue with the sessions.

**Q. What if I don't like my Mentor?**

For a variety of reasons we understand that there may be times when you don't feel that you get on with a person you are working with. Your Mentor should regularly review how you are finding things and we encourage students to inform your Mentor if it's not working as it may be possible to change Mentors. However we do understand that this may feel too uncomfortable so we would advise you either email [cmh@worc.ac.uk](mailto:cmh@worc.ac.uk) and request a change of Mentor or talk to a disability adviser.

**Q. What if I have been given a specialist Mentor but don't need one?**

You do not have to see a Mentor if you don't feel you need to at any time during your time at University. However you would lose this provision on your DSA package.