

ACCESSING DISABILITY AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Expectations for
disabled students

Contents

Introduction	4
Who do we support?	4
What is a disability and long-term health condition?	4
Short term illness	5
Why it is important to tell us about your disability and long-term health condition	5
When should you tell us about your disability or long-term health condition?	6
If you are unsure what you want to share about your disability or health	6
How do I access support?	6
Providing evidence of your disability	7
Below are guidelines about what type of medical evidence we accept for Aston funded support only. If you have any questions, please contact us.	7
The medical evidence must include	7
Evidence we cannot accept	8
If you are having problems getting the evidence.....	8
How we use your information	8
Who will know about your disability?	8
What about people outside the University?.....	8
Will you contact my parents or family?.....	8
Progressing your support.....	9
How will staff teaching me know about the support I need?.....	9
What might my Support Recommendations include?	9
What other type of support can be provided?	10
Other advice we provide	10
Is the evidence for Aston Support the same as Disabled Student Allowances (DSA)?	10
More about Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)	10
Setting up your DSA support.....	11
Aston staff members who are also studying at Aston.....	11
International Students.....	12
Degree Apprentices.....	12
Post graduate research students	12
If you need support on a placement	13
What happens if you do not respond to us	13
What we do not do.....	14
Deadlines and extensions	14
Exceptional/Extenuating Circumstances	14

We do not tell you about exams and assignment deadlines	14
Personal care support.....	14
Other diagnostic assessments.....	14
Aston Staff with a disability	14
Here is a summary checklist of how to access support	15
Other support available at Aston	16
Feedback, complaints and compliments	17
About the Disability and Academic Support Team	18
Ways to contact us	18
Opening Hours -Term Time.....	18
Opening Hours -Outside Term Time.....	18
Hub Drop In	18
Book an Appointment with the Hub.....	19
Not able to come in?	19
Contact the Hub	19

Welcome to Aston University's, Disability and Academic Support service,

We are here to support students with a disability, no question is too big or small, we will do our best to help you. On the last page of this document, it tells you the four ways that you can contact us, we look forward to hearing from you.

Introduction

As a university we aim to remove any barriers to learning, where it is reasonable to do so. We seek to be proactive in our approach to anticipate your need for adjustments. We want to enable you to access your education to the standard offered to Aston students in general.

It is important that you read this document in conjunction with other relevant Aston documents for students, for example, student code of conduct or behaviour guidelines and student policies related to your specific course.

Who do we support?

We support students who have a 'disability and a 'long-term health condition' and those who are awaiting a formal diagnosis and there is a professional opinion the support needs will be long term.

What is a disability and long-term health condition?

We know that the word 'disability' can mean different things to different people, and you may not have thought of yourself as being disabled before or you are unsure.

It is worth considering whether you might be entitled to support, especially if you've had support in the past, such as exam arrangements at school or college, or if you have received additional support at work, then this document will help you to understand how we can support you.

The Equality Act defines a disabled person as 'A person with a disability if:

- a. they have a physical or mental impairment, likely to last 12 months or more
- b. the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

'**substantial**' means that it is more than minor or trivial, for example, it takes much longer than it would usually, to complete a daily task.

This means your health condition is '**long-term and adverse**' meaning 12 months or more. A short term health condition could become long short term due to complications. This also means even if your health has improved it is likely to reoccur.

Follow this link to find out more about the [Equality Act 2010 \('the Act'\)](#)

The Equality Act identifies the following as examples of disability:

- Hearing impairment/loss
- Visual impairment/loss
- Physical/mobility disabilities
- Specific learning difficulties/differences (SpLDs) such as dyslexia or dyspraxia
- Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder or AD (H)D
- Autism Condition.
- A mental health condition or mental illness such as depression, bipolar affective disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- A long-term medical condition such as chronic fatigue, MS, sickle cell, thalassaemia, asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, cancer and HIV

The definition of disability is very wide and there are many more health conditions that are not included in the list above, if you are unsure, please contact us.

Short term illness

If you have a temporary illness, or health condition for example, you have broken your arm or you are recovering from an operation which is likely to last less than 12 months, this guide is not for you. Please speak to someone in your Academic College who will be able to advise you. If your short-term illness becomes long-term, then contact us.

The *Extenuating Circumstances Policy* [Exceptional Circumstances](#) could also be used as a way of handling some short-term conditions, speak to someone in your Academic College or a Personal Tutor or the course leader.

Why it is important to tell us about your disability and long-term health condition

We want you to achieve your potential while at Aston. We pride ourselves on supporting you at every stage.

If you choose not to tell us about your disability, or you limit the information you share with us, you may not be able to access the range of support Aston can offer and we know disabled students usually benefit from our support.

When should you tell us about your disability or long-term health condition?

On your UCAS application form, or your direct application to the University.

You can also share information at any time during your studies through to graduation. Although, it is your choice, the sooner you share information, the better, especially if you require a range of support and alterations, for example, to on-campus accommodation.

If you do not contact us at an early stage or apply late with a variety of support needs, you may be required to defer entry, if we cannot safely accommodate your needs at the start of term.

We also understand that you may receive a late diagnosis of an illness or receive confirmation of a specific learning difference during the course of your studies at Aston. We will still put in support once we have all the necessary information from you, however, if there are delays to setting up your support which subsequently may impact your studies, you will need to discuss other options with your Academic College.

To access support complete the Student Welfare Request form, [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#). At the end of this document there are other ways you can contact us.

If you are unsure what you want to share about your disability or health

You may be unsure about sharing your support needs with us or your Academic College. You must share your disability if your course is covered by Fitness to Practice criteria and policy. This includes any disability and health condition that may affect your practice must be declared, for example, courses while as a student, you will interact with patients and members of the public.

You are expected to share your disability if you are studying a profession where you will be using a protected title such as pharmacist, nurse and solicitor. On o expected interactions with patients and members of the public, even while a student.

If you are unsure speak to someone with in your Academic College. If your course has Professional Statutory Regulatory Body Requirements (PSRB), this link may also assist you [PSRB FAQ document | HESA](#).

How do I access support?

In order to explore support for you, you must complete a form and provide us with documented evidence of your disability.

The form that must be completed is called a Student Welfare Request form, you can click on this link to complete the form on line [Student Welfare Support Request Form](#)

office.com). The form also includes a disclosure question and this gives you different options to store and share your information with only the relevant people. This consent to share is separate to the 'next of kin' information held by the university.

Providing evidence of your disability

To start the process of putting in support, you will need to provide our service with documentary evidence of your disability, you can do this at the same time that you complete the Student Welfare Request Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](https://office.com)

Please send us documented evidence of your disability as soon as possible. If we do not have this information, we may not be able to put in the right level of support for you.

You must give your evidence to us directly, we will not accept any evidence from a third party, such as your GP. If you are unsure, please contact us and we will be happy to advise you.

Below are guidelines about what type of medical evidence we accept for Aston funded support only. If you have any questions, please contact us.

- A letter from a consultant or other qualified medical professional that gives a diagnosis of your condition and the effects it has on you.
- A diagnostic assessment report by an educational psychologist or specialist teacher assessor diagnosing a Specific Learning Difficulty for example, dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc.
- We will accept Form 8 applications for exam access arrangements you may have had in school or college
- We will consider information in an Education Health Care Plan, Statements of Special Education Needs or Individual Education Plans

The medical evidence must include

- a letter or report with a clear clinical/medical diagnosis of a disability that is likely to affect your ability to study
- your needs are under investigation, awaiting diagnosis and the professional indicates this is likely to be long term
- clearly state that your disability is long term (e.g. has lasted for, or is likely to last for at least 12 months)
- indicate the impact your disability has on your daily life, particularly your studies and if possible the type of support you require
- this must be on official headed paper
- include name and contact details of the professional
- have a date on the report or letter, which is as up to date as possible

- must be signed by a medical professional, with their role/job title
- must be written in English or be a formally certified translation.

Evidence we cannot accept

- The person providing the medical evidence cannot be a family member, a relative or friend even if they are a qualified professional
- We cannot accept a medical letter or documentation that has been changed or altered by anyone who did not write or produce the medical letter or report.

If you are having problems getting the evidence

If you are unable to get medical evidence, or you are unable to get through to your GP, Health professional or Assessor please contact us for advice.

If you require support to pay for the cost of a GP letter as part of your evidence of a disability please contact us, in some instances there are ways in which Aston university can cover some of the cost.

How we use your information

Please note the Disability and Academic Support service stores all medical evidence securely. Information will not be shared outside the team or with anyone else in the University, without your consent.

Who will know about your disability?

In order to support you, we may need to share information about your disability with other people in the University. This is on a strictly “need-to-know” basis – in other words, we will only share sufficient details to resolve any issues, and only with the people involved in resolving these.

What about people outside the University?

We will not share your information with people outside the University, except where you have given us your explicit permission. If you have given us permission we will only share information that is necessary.

Will you contact my parents or family?

We do not usually discuss your support with parents or family, unless you have given us permission for a specific instance. We have a duty of care to all Aston students, so if we become worried about you, we may need to discuss your needs without your permission. This will be in exceptional circumstances and this decision can only be made by someone at Director level or above.

Progressing your support

Once you have completed the Student Welfare Support Request Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#) and provided us with the appropriate evidence, then we will put together your support. You may be contacted by a disability advisor by email or asked to meet someone in person, or on line through Microsoft teams, we will do what is best for you.

Your support must be reasonable and we understand this means different things to different people, so we will offer to discuss this with you and someone from your course.

If you have attended an appointment with someone from the Disability and Academic Support team, someone will explain the next steps to you.

How will staff teaching me know about the support I need?

Your specific plan of support will be outlined in a document called Support Recommendations (SR) often referred to as 'SR'.

Your Support Recommendations will be based on the information you provided along with consideration of your course requirements.

In most circumstances you will be asked to approve your Support Recommendations before it is shared with the module leader. It is the responsibility of your module leader to share your Support Recommendations, with the necessary people who will implement the actions.

Your Support Recommendations will not include specific details about your disability, unless you give us permission to include this.

If your disability changes, please let us know and in communication with you we will amend your Support Recommendations at any stage of your studies. We may require additional supporting medical evidence.

What might my Support Recommendations include?

Below are just a few examples of reasonable adjustments which may be included in your Support Recommendation. What will be recommended for you will depend on your specific requirements.

- Particular exam arrangements
- Handouts in advance of lectures
- Request for lectures are recorded with captions/subtitles so you can watch this at another time.
- Being allowed to take a note taker or voice recorder into lectures

What other type of support can be provided?

Specialist screening and assessment

We can offer a limited specialist screening and assessment service for students who experience difficulties associated with dyslexia. This service is provided to final year students in accordance with the 'Specific Learning Difficulty Screening and Assessment Policy', which is available from us.

Students eligible for screening and assessment will first be asked to read and sign a student agreement, which is on the referral form, you will still have to complete the Student Welfare Request Form first [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#).

Students with more generalised learning differences who do not meet the criteria for dyslexia screening and assessment but have a documented history of substantial need will be considered for reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis. You will still need to complete a Student Welfare Support Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#) and send your evidence as outlined above.

Other advice we provide

- Advising your Academic College on the support you may need in your learning.
- Giving you advice based on your situation
- Giving you information about other support related to your health or course
- Advice from a specialist tutor
- Provide advice on some assistive technology
- Support and advice related to accommodation
- Support for accessible parking or on campus bike storage
- Provide you with ongoing support throughout your time at Aston

There is other support we can provide based on your needs, the above list is only some examples

Is the evidence for Aston Support the same as Disabled Student Allowances (DSA)?

The evidence and the process we have outlined above only relates to accessing support from Aston. DSA have a separate evidence criteria and process, this link provides you with more information [Disabled Students' Allowances \(DSAs\) Disability Evidence Form \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) .

More about Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)

Some students are eligible for DSA. You may also find it useful to visit the [YourDSA website](#) for a good overview of the process of applying for DSA.

Disabled students who apply for DSAs find this support helpful. The process can take three months or more. We recommend you apply early, so you do not miss out on this beneficial support.

We are happy to provide you with advice and assistance to apply for DSA, we cannot apply for you.

[Disabled Students' Allowances](#) (DSAs) can pay for study-related costs you may incur at university as a result of a disability, mental health difficulty or specific learning difficulty/difference, such as dyslexia.

The allowances are not means-tested and should not affect any disability benefits you may currently receive. You do not have to pay this money back, as the allowances are not loans. You may have to return equipment if you leave the course early. DSA could pay for:

- Computer equipment and assistive software e.g. read-aloud, mind-mapping and note-taking software
- Other equipment e.g. digital recorders, radio aids, personal CCTV
- Assistance from support workers e.g. mentors, dyslexia support tutors, British Sign Language Interpreters

Important things to remember about applying for DSAs:

- It's your responsibility to apply for DSAs; we are happy to provide advice and assistance.
- It can take an average of three months for an application to be processed, so apply as soon as possible. This is particularly important if you know you are likely to need a lot of support at university - if you don't apply as soon as possible, your package of support will be delayed.
- You can apply for DSAs before you know which university you'll be attending, so you should apply early from around March of the year you'll be starting at university.
- Read up on the application process first, as there is key information you need to provide, as well as critical steps along the way which you need to know about. More information about DSAs is available on the [DSA](#) website.

Setting up your DSA support

It is your responsibility to set up and arrange your DSA support, the details of your provider and what you need do is normally included in your DSA2 letter. Contact us if you need support.

Aston staff members who are also studying at Aston

If you are a member of staff undertaking studies at Aston you can contact us. We can arrange to see you on a one to one basis, at a time and in a space which is confidential. To speak to someone please email studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk. You

will still need to complete the Student Welfare Request Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#), and provide us with written information as evidence, please see above for the criteria.

International Students

We will provide academic support for international students with a disability and we will put in reasonable adjustments. Please read above to find out more about the types of support available. Please complete the Student Welfare Request Form first [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#). You will also need to provide us with written information as evidence, please see above for the criteria.

International students are not eligible for UK government funding such as Disabled Students' Allowance. It's therefore extremely important that you contact us early in the application process, so that we may assess and explore your support requirements.

As an overseas student you will not be eligible for personal care support funded by social services, and the University is unable to fund this kind of assistance. If you are likely to require any personal care support, you need to ensure well in advance of arrival that you have sufficient funding to cover the cost of this, and you are able to arrange this support yourself. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Degree Apprentices

We will provide academic reasonable adjustment support for degree apprentices. If you are a degree apprentice you will not be eligible for DSA. Please contact us as soon as possible, if you have any questions because we will access support for you from a different source. To access support please complete the Student Welfare Support Request Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#).

You will also need to provide us with written information as evidence, please see above for the criteria

Post graduate research students

Some Post graduate research (PGR) students are eligible for DSA. If your research is funded by the Research Council, we will support you to apply for funding.

We will provide academic reasonable adjustments to support you, discussions will take place with you and your supervisor to ensure your needs are documented. We will also offer support to ensure you have the appropriate ergonomic equipment in

place, this may include adjustments to desk arrangement. Please contact us as soon as possible, if you have any questions because we will access support for you from a different source. To access support please complete the Student Welfare Support Request Form [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#).

You will also need to provide us with written information as evidence, please see above for the criteria.

Due to the nature of PGR degrees, most reasonable adjustments will be different for PGR students. Many research degree programmes do not have traditionally taught, formative sessions or summative exams. For those that do, primarily professional doctorates or taught MSc degrees, only some of the reasonable adjustments outlined in this document may be relevant.

Please note that the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#), [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#) and [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) should be read in conjunction with this section.

Please contact us, so we can put in place the right reasonable adjustments.

If you need support on a placement

Please communicate with your disability advisor who will support you to communicate with the placements team. If you require Personal care support and your placement is overseas, this could take 12 months to set up, due to regulations in other countries. Please speak to us or the placements team as soon as possible, to provide the best chance to have the support you need.

What happens if you do not respond to us

We understand students may not respond to our emails or telephone calls for a variety of reasons. You maybe unwell or be unsure about whether you still want support. You may not respond because you are unclear about the stage you are in within the process of setting up your support. We encourage you to get back in touch with us as soon as you can, especially to update us on any changes.

You have the right not to engage with us if you so choose. We will usually contact you on three occasions. However, if you do not respond to our correspondence this may impact us finalising your support and your reasonable adjustments may not be implemented.

Depending on your disability and long-term health condition there are exceptional situations where we may still put in some reasonable adjustments in line with our need to promote equality, this will be decided based on a student's individual situation.

In the majority of situations, we will send students three reminder emails and try to contact students by phone. To avoid the potential for perceived harassment, we may not pursue further contact with you. The onus maybe on you to make contact with us.

What we do not do

Deadlines and extensions

We do not have the authority to grant extensions to scheduled coursework deadlines. Extensions to deadlines for students with disabilities are subject to the University's policy on the late submission of work, and subsequent penalties and individual Academic College practice.

Exceptional/Extenuating Circumstances

We do not make the decision on Exceptional/Extenuating Circumstances. The student is advised to inform their College Administrative Office as soon as possible in situations they cannot complete a piece of coursework on time for disability-related reasons, and where extensions to deadlines are not permissible. If relevant, the Academic College may then direct the student to apply for Exceptional/Extenuating Circumstances. In some situation we can write a supporting statement to support your Exceptional/Extenuating Circumstances application. This is a link for more information on [Exceptional Circumstances](#).

We do not tell you about exams and assignment deadlines

It is your responsibility to check Blackboard for details and dates about class times, assignments and exams dates and deadlines, this maybe different from when you studied at school or college. If you are unsure of deadlines or where to find the information speak to someone in your Academic College.

Personal care support

No, we do not fund personal or medical health support for any UK or International student. If you think you will need personal care support to live independently at university, such as help with dressing, personal hygiene, cooking and cleaning, this cannot be funded via Disabled Students' Allowances. Instead, you will need to contact your local Social Services team to discuss a package of support. Follow this link to find out about your local authority [details of local councils](#).

Other diagnostic assessments

No, we do not complete assessments for Autism, or ADHD, if you require an assessment, please contact your GP.

Aston Staff with a disability

No, we do not provide advice or support for disabled staff members who are not studying at Aston. If you are a disabled member of staff who require a reasonable adjustment, please speak to your line manager.

Here is a summary checklist of how to access support

You can access support at any time, contact us if you have any questions because the process can be complicated.

1. Completed the form to request support [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#)

2. Provide written medical evidence? If you are not sure about the information required, come and speak to us

3. Agree your Support Recommendations.

4. Contact us immediately if your Support Recommendations needs to be amended.

5. Apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) –[DSA](#) we recommend you start! If you get stuck, please contact us

6. If you have applied DSAs and you don't know what to do next?

7. If you have applied for DSA and you have had no response for over 3 months

8. If your DSA application has been declined.

9. If you have had the DSA application has been approved and you do not know what to do next.

8. Responded to correspondence so we can support you in the right way.

9. If you have any questions about reasonable adjustments for your disability and health condition.

10. Contact us if you believe your Support Recommendations are not being followed.

Other support available at Aston

- **Visit your Aston Student Support Office** to find out what kind of help is offered in your particular Academic College
- **Contact your lecturers or your personal tutor** if you need any clarification on anything, they often hold drop-in office hours, or you may be able to send them an email.
- **Learning Development Centre (LDC)** -The LDC has a wide range of online resources and programmes to support your learning and connect you with peers, follow this link for more information [Resources for current students - LDC | Aston University](#)
- **Library** - Helping staff and students to make the most of Aston's Library Services, follow this link for more information [Library | Aston University](#)
- **Other inclusive resources** – this page provides other inclusive tools and resources, follow this link for more information <https://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/support-services/disability-support/resources>
- **Student Union** – You can also contact Aston Student Union for further advice or support, follow this link for more information [Home \(astonsu.com\)](#)
- **Other Student Welfare Support at Aston**
Please follow this link to find out about other support which Student Welfare provide www.aston.ac.uk/studentwelfare

Feedback, complaints and compliments

We want to deliver an excellent service to all disabled students. Although, we get it right sometimes, there are times that we need to improve. We are always learning, so please tell us about the service the Disability & Academic Support Service provides.

These are some of the ways you can provide us with feedback:

Read the Complaints Procedure, follow this link [Student-Complaints-Procedure-August 2021.pdf \(aston.ac.uk\)](#)

Complete a Complaints form, follow this link, [Formal-Complaint-Form.docx \(live.com\)](#)

Feedback through the Students Union - If you would like to provide feedback or complain through Aston Student Union, follow this link www.astonsu.com/feedback/

Send an Email - you can provide your feedback directly to student welfare by emailing [-studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk](mailto:studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk) you can also complete a student welfare feedback form.

About the Disability and Academic Support Team

The Disability & Academic Support service includes a range of staff, some of whom have a disability and long-term health conditions, so we can relate to some of the issues students experience. We do not make assumptions and we always seek to understand how your disability and health impacts your studies as well as your overall wellbeing.

We recognise sometimes students with a disability have to undertake more administrative tasks and repeat their story to many people before they can access support and we are on a journey to improving this within Aston. We aim to provide an excellent service and we are open to feedback to achieve this.

Please read below about ways to contact us and share your experience, good or bad. You can also read above about the different ways you can provide us with feedback.

As a team we are all really helpful, passionate, kind and fair to all students regardless of their disability or health needs. We know others across Aston are also promoting disability inclusion and we are all working together to improve the disabled student journey.

We look forward to meeting you and supporting you while at Aston, equipping you to have an impact beyond the university.

Ways to contact us

There are four ways to contact Disability & Academic Support service if you have any questions, we are always happy to assist.

1. If you have a specific question send an email to the student welfare team, studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk always include your student SUN number

2. **Visit the Hub**, click on this link to find more information [The Hub | Aston University](#)

How to contact the Hub

Opening Hours -Term Time

09.00 am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday

Opening Hours -Outside Term Time

10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday

Hub Drop In

The Hub is located just off the Upper Foyer on the ground floor of the Main Building. From the University reception go up the first flight of stairs, and turn right. You can't miss the team!

Book an Appointment with the Hub

The staff might be able to help with your query without an appointment. However, if you'd like to speak to a Hub advisor in person or by phone, please visit, call or email the Hub to arrange an appointment.

Not able to come in?

If you are unable to access the Hub during normal opening hours, for example because you are out of the UK, please let us know. The Hub can arrange for either a telephone appointment or to speak by Microsoft team at a mutually convenient time.

Contact the Hub

General queries:

thehub@aston.ac.uk, 0121 204 4007

International queries:

issu@aston.ac.uk, 0121 204 4567

3. Complete a student welfare support request form to access support [Student Welfare Support Request Form \(office.com\)](#). You can use this form even if you are unsure what support you need or if you need support from different services. You can get support to complete this form.

4. Attend a drop in session at the Disability and Academic Support office at G18 in the main building (next door to the Solve desk)

Drop in session times- are 10 am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, no appointment is needed. There will be a sign on the door if our office time changes.

We look forward to meeting you,

Disability & Academic Support

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0.1	Vanessa Francis	12.01.2023	First draft
0.2	Vanessa Francis	14.03.2023	Second draft
0.3	Vanessa Francis	25.05.2023	Third Draft
0.4	Vanessa Francis	01.06.2023	Fourth Draft
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