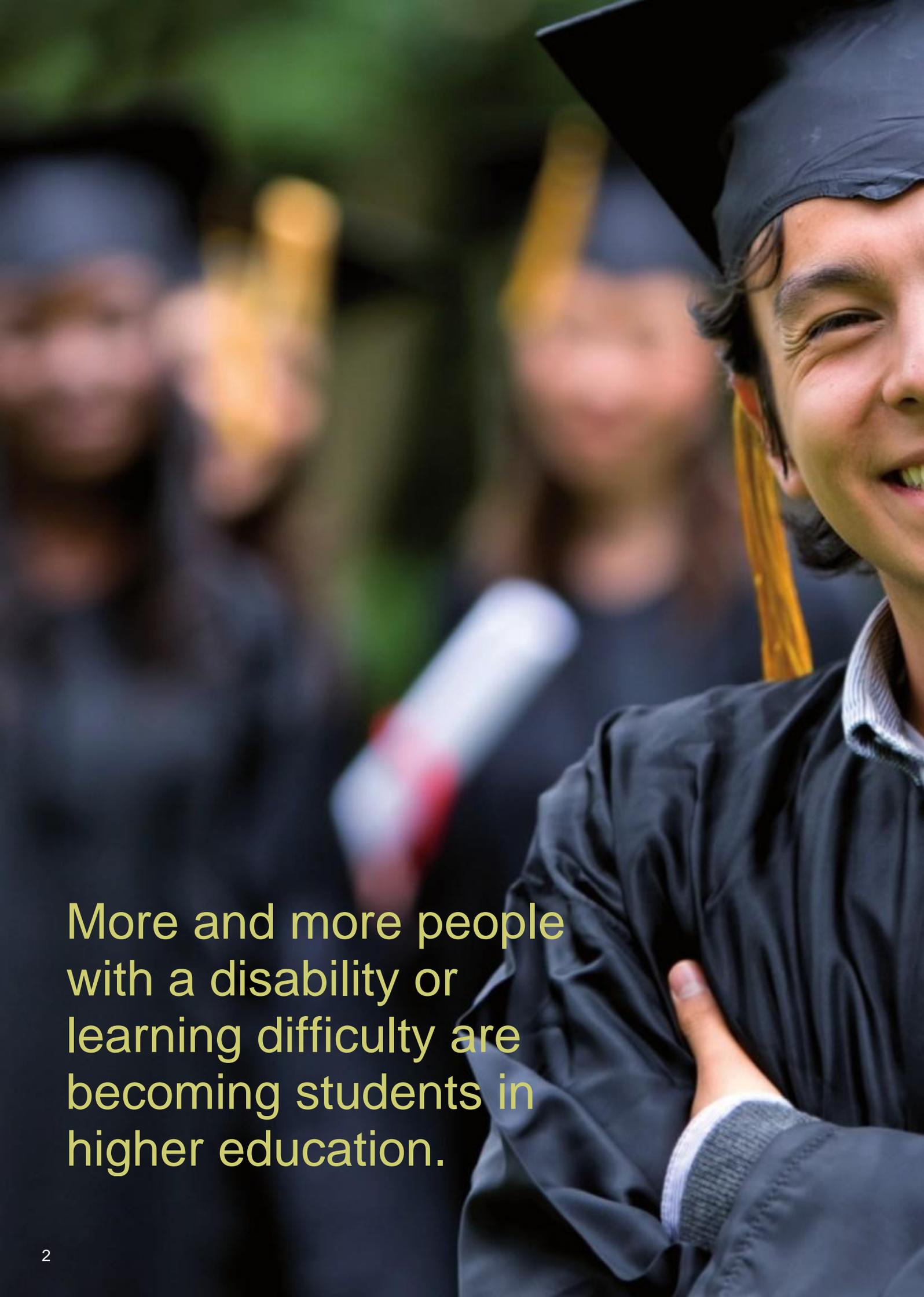




AccessAbility

Supporting young people
with a disability and/or
additional needs into
higher education.



A young man in a black graduation cap and gown is smiling broadly, looking slightly to the right. He has a yellow tassel on his cap. In the background, other graduates in similar attire are blurred, some holding rolled-up diplomas. The scene is outdoors with green foliage visible in the distance.

More and more people with a disability or learning difficulty are becoming students in higher education.



Introduction

University offers a unique life experience providing you with the opportunity to take your education to the next level and study something you love whilst enjoying a rich cultural and social scene. A higher education qualification can also help increase your earning potential with a wider range of opportunities and a more rewarding career.

More and more people with a disability or learning difficulty are becoming students in higher education. Disabilities include long-term illnesses, mental-health conditions or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. This booklet looks at the support you can receive both financially and from your university to help you achieve your full potential.

Is Higher Education for me?

Higher education is the next step on from further education or sixth form. Studying at university or college will enable you to work towards a range of qualifications for example a degree (BA or BSc), Foundation Degree, or a diploma/certificate of higher education.

You can apply to university through the University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS). Entry to a university is based on your academic ability and it is illegal for a university to discriminate based on your disability. Universities must actively seek to ensure the right support is in place to enable you to make the most of your university life.

It is very important to make your future college or university aware of your disability and/or learning difficulty. Therefore when you complete your UCAS form you will be asked to indicate whether you have a disability, this could include:

Specific learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD

Visual impairment

Hearing loss

Mobility difficulty, including being a wheelchair user

Autistic spectrum conditions including Asperger's Syndrome

Mental health problems

Medical problems e.g. asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, heart problems

There is a lot to consider if you are planning to go into higher education and you will need to give plenty of thought to:

Where and what to study

The support you may need while studying

Support with day to day living

Money and funding

If you have a statement of special educational needs your Essex County Council Transition Pathway Service Personal Adviser will be able to provide you with information, advice and guidance to help you prepare for your move into higher education.



My story

Sam Honour (3rd Year LLB Law and Politics, University of Essex)

“I was initially attracted to studying at university due to the increased employment prospects following graduation, as well as meeting new people, and studying in a new environment. I suffer from Asperger’s Syndrome, so I had a number of concerns to which I wanted answers.

One of things that concerned me the most was what forms of support would be available. I found out about Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA), and began the application process. I was quite surprised at the range of things that were covered by DSA in terms of support. Once I had arrived at University, I met with a Student Support adviser, who helped with arranging equipment and study support for my time at university. DSA has given me access to specialist IT software, a study skills tutor to help with essay planning, and audio equipment to aid note-taking.

At the end of my degree I’m looking to follow a career in the legal profession.”





“Once at university I met with a student support adviser, who helped me arrange equipment and study support.”



Financial support for students

Student finance

All UK students can apply for student finance including student loans, maintenance grant, special support grant and the access to learning fund.

For more information, please call Student Finance England on: 0845 300 5090 or visit: www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

If you are undertaking a course in medicine, dentistry, or healthcare such as nursing, you can apply for a bursary from the NHS. A bursary is a yearly payment to help with living costs and tuition fees. For more information visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students
Please note students do not have to pay tuition fees for NHS funded courses.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a grant to help with the support and extra costs you may face because of your disability and/or additional needs. Conditions covered include long-term illnesses, mental health conditions or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

The DSA covers four types of support:

Specialist equipment: A minidisk or digital recorder for recording lectures or seminars, a computer with specialist software, keyboard, mouse or screen; height adjustable desk and/or chair; reading pen and CCTV for enlarging print.

Non-medical helper(s): A helper can support you by taking notes, work as a lip speaker or

a British Sign Language interpreter. Or you can also receive one-to-one sessions with a specialist dyslexia tutor, assistance in the library with reaching and carrying books and photocopying, fetching and carrying in practical lessons in the laboratory or during fieldwork.

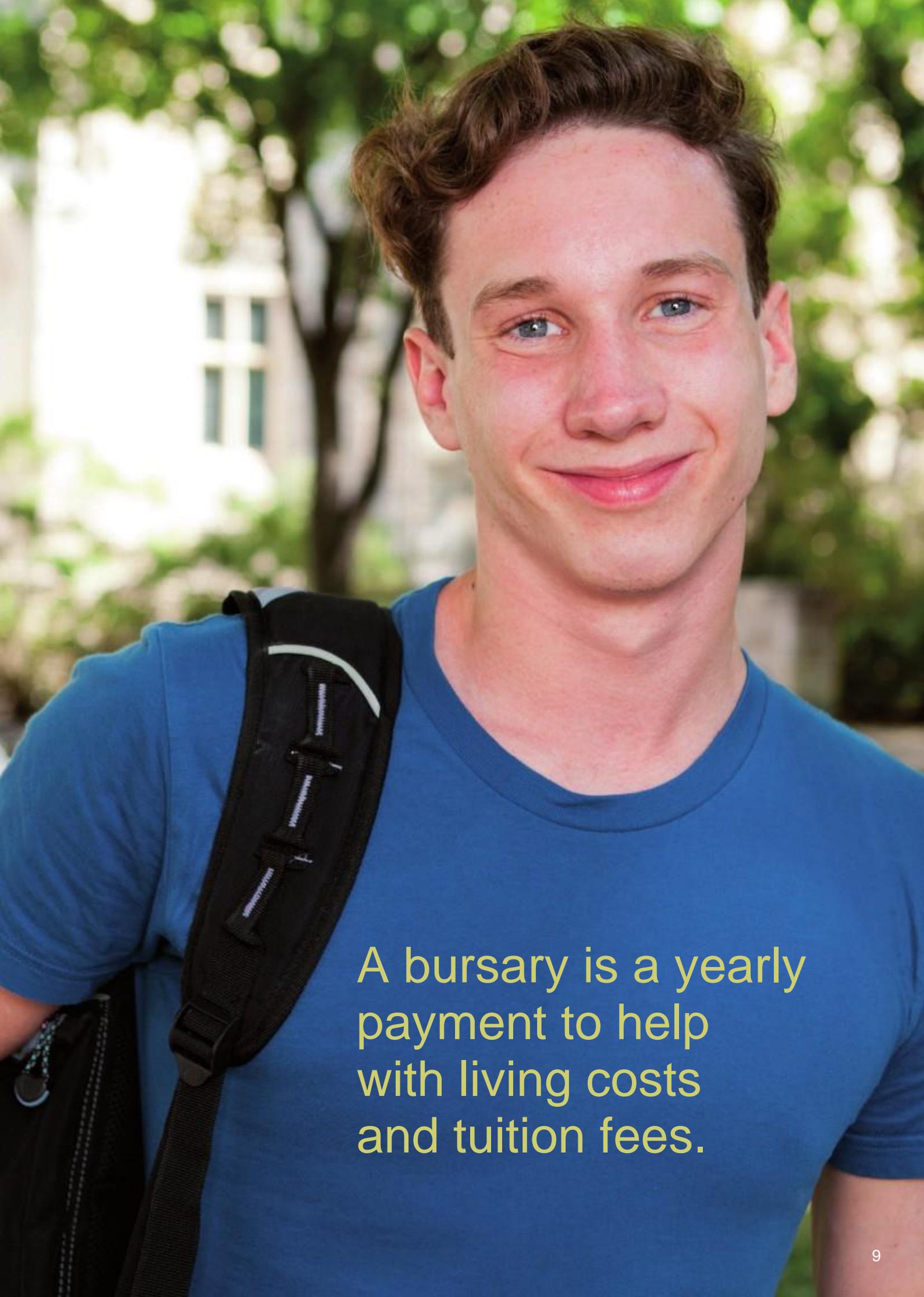
General allowance: This covers items such as Braille paper or coloured paper rather than basic white paper; or extra photocopying costs when making notes for research.

Travel: If you incur additional travel costs to attend your course because of your disability, the DSA may be able to contribute towards them.

DSA does not cover any daily living support or personal care that a disabled student may need, especially if you are living away from home. If you need support for daily living or for assistance with personal care you will need to contact your local Social Care Services.

If you are eligible for social care services your social worker will work with you to develop a support plan and funding will be administered by social services or through direct payments so you can buy the support you require. For more information on Essex County Council Adult Social Care (18 years +) please call: 0845 603 7630.

If you are already in receipt of Disability Living Allowance your entitlement will not be affected, however if you receive the care element you will be expected to contribute from this to the cost of your care.



A bursary is a yearly payment to help with living costs and tuition fees.





Stages in the application for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

You can apply for DSA once you have started your application with Student Finance England. There is a section on the application form to indicate that you also wish to apply for DSA. The grant you receive is not affected by your household income, and the allowances don't have to be paid back as the support you receive is paid direct to your university or service providers. DSA funding will be paid on top of any standard student finance.

To complete your student finance application visit: www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

When you return your application form for DSA you will need to provide evidence of your disability. This should include a letter from a doctor or a qualified medical practitioner. Students with specific learning difficulties should attach a diagnostic assessment report which has been carried out after your sixteenth birthday, by a psychologist or registered specialist teacher.

If you are applying for an NHS Bursary funded course, you should receive a bursary application once the university has told NHS Bursaries that they are expecting you to start your course.

You will need to state on your bursary application form that you have a disability, learning difficulty or medical condition. You will then receive a separate application form. Alternatively you can download the form from: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

If you have told the Open University (OU) that you have a disability, mental health condition or a specific learning difficulty, the OU's DSA Office will automatically send you all the information you need to apply. You will need to send your completed form and any relevant documents back to the Open University's DSA Office. Alternatively you can apply online at: www.open.ac.uk/financialsupport/apply



Needs Assessment

Once your funding body has decided that you are eligible for DSA, they will ask you to attend an Access Centre for a Needs Assessment. This will usually take place at your local Access Centre where a specialist will work with you to identify the support you will need, including equipment and assistive software. A report outlining your support needs, costs and recommended suppliers will be sent to you and your funding body.

For details of your local Access Centre please visit: www.nnac.org

Once the funding has been agreed you will be able to order the equipment from the agreed suppliers. If you buy equipment that is not recommended or use a different supplier, the cost may not be met.

You may find it helpful to forward a copy of your Needs Assessment report to the Disability Adviser at your new university or college. You must also inform the Disability Adviser if you require any non-medical support including sessions with a Dyslexia Support Tutor, note taker, BSL interpreter and help with planning, organisation and homework management.

DSA funding: paying for services and equipment

Once funding has been agreed you will need to decide how you are going to manage your funding, including paying for services and equipment. The DSA offers two payment options:

Option1

DSA funding can be sent direct to you and you will be responsible for paying the suppliers of equipment and non-medical support.

Option2

The DSA funding is paid direct to suppliers and your university or college will be paid direct for providing non-medical support.

If you are an NHS Bursary student the money for equipment and software will usually be paid into your account. You then have to buy the equipment and support from the recommended supplier and send receipts to the NHS.

How long does all this take?

It usually takes between three to six months, so apply as soon as you can. Try to be patient as everyone else has to go through the same process as you.

Did you know that...

DSA does not have to be repaid and any equipment funded by DSA does not have to be given back on completion of your course. If you leave the course without completing it, you would need to discuss what will happen to the equipment with your DSA funder.



Your higher education timeline

Year 12 (Easter)

Start researching courses and visiting university open days. University open days offer the perfect opportunity to learn more about student life, courses, careers, finance and the support offered to students with a disability and/or additional needs. You will also need to think about what support you may need both financially and for your studies whilst at university.

June/July

UCAS conventions: The UCAS Higher Education Conventions are a series of 49 exhibition-style events held throughout the UK each year. The conventions bring pre-applicant university and college students together with universities and colleges within the UCAS scheme to inform and guide about the choices and options that are available.

August

The summer is a good opportunity to start putting together your personal statement and finding your GCSE certificates for your UCAS form.

September/October

Finalise your five university choices and personal statement and complete your UCAS form.

15 October

If you are applying to Oxford/Cambridge or applying for a medical, veterinarian or dentistry course you must submit your completed UCAS form by the 15 October.

15 January

The deadline for all UCAS application forms is 15 January. However, it is very important that you talk to your school or college about internal deadlines as your tutor will need time to complete your reference.

Your application form will then be processed and invitations for interviews and offers will be made. For more information visit: www.ucas.ac.uk

Finally it is important to remember to talk to your future university about your support needs.



Useful Links

Disability related sites

www.education.gov.uk – for information and advice on all stages of education and learning.

www.disability.gov.uk – how to cope with disabilities in school and college.

www.transitioninforonetwork.org.uk – for disabled young people in transition to adulthood, their families and people they work with.

www.disabilityrightsuk.org – providing advice for students with disabilities on the Equality Act, welfare benefits and access to higher education.

Qualifications and options

www.qca.org.uk – information on curriculum requirements, guidance, case studies, key skills.

www.shell-livewire.org and www.princes-trust.org.uk – for self employment information and case studies.

Higher education

www.nus.org.uk – The National Union of Students (NUS) represents the interests of students in further and higher education throughout the United Kingdom.

www.prospects.ac.uk – graduate destinations and jobs.

www.ucas.com – UCAS site for course and entry profile information: links to universities.

www.ucas.com/parents – exclusive parents' website which enables parents to find out all about higher education and the application process. Register online and receive a free copy of the 'Parent Guide' and quarterly email bulletins.

Finance

www.studentsupportdirect.co.uk – government supplied information about finance for student of all ages.

www.direct.gov.uk – government supplied information about services and support for young people with disabilities.

www.opendays.com – information on university and college open days.

www.i-essex.co.uk – information on local courses, training opportunities and transition into adulthood.

www.anglia.ac.uk – information on Anglia Ruskin University.

www.essex.ac.uk – information on the University of Essex.

This information is issued by
Essex County Council, Transition Pathway Service (TPS), Anglia Ruskin University,
University of Essex.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By email:

transition.pathwayservice@essex.gov.uk

answers@anglia.ac.uk

enquiries@essex.ac.uk

Visit our websites:

www.i-essex.gov.uk

www.anglia.ac.uk

www.essex.ac.uk

By telephone:

Essex County Council (TPS) 01245 430411

Anglia Ruskin University 0845 271 3333

University of Essex 01206 873666

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