



## Bar Council Equality and Diversity Guide Support for Students with Disabilities

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT: POSTGRADUATE STUDIES LEADING TO QUALIFICATION FOR THE BAR

1. Many course providers provide bursaries or other forms of financial assistance to their students. As first port of call, students are advised to contact their institution to find out what financial support they offer their disabled students.
2. The Inns are often able to provide financial support to their disabled student members too – e.g. the Inner Temple has a £15,000 fund from which it provides Disability Awards to its students.
3. Students are also able to apply for help with expenses attributable to their disabilities from the DWP in the form of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Here is a link to further information about DSA on [ww.gov.uk](http://ww.gov.uk) [here](#)
4. DSA can help with the costs of:
  - Specialist equipment – e.g. a computer
  - Non-medical helpers
  - Extra costs of travel caused by disability
  - Other disability-related costs of studyingWhere DSA is awarded for equipment, students are required to pay the first £200. The awards are paid directly to students in receipt of DSA or (in certain circumstances) the suppliers of any necessary equipment.
5. Students that are engaged in postgraduate studies leading to qualification for the Bar at a UK university should be entitled to apply for DSA. If proposing to study at a private institution that is not a university, it is sensible to check whether students at that institution are eligible for DSA.
6. Applications for DSA are made to:
  - Students living in England - Student Finance England

- Students living in Wales - Student Finance Wales.
7. Once a student's personal and course eligibility has been established, they will need to provide satisfactory evidence of their disability. Evidence of disability can be:
    - A diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty
    - A letter from your doctor or consultant setting out the nature of your condition and how it impacts you
  8. If the student has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in England, this can be used to support the diagnosis and to indicate the areas where they need support.
  9. The awards of DSA are made after an assessment of need. Student Finance will contact the student and ask them to arrange the needs assessment:
    - There are assessment centres across the country
    - It will be for the student to arrange the assessment
    - Usually an assessment will require the student to physically attending the assessment centre but where this is not practicable - e.g. the student has a disability that makes it difficult for them to travel – alternative arrangements may be possible. Until an assessment has been carried out, Student Finance cannot process an application for DSA. Students should therefore seek to arrange an assessment as soon as possible.
  10. Course providers may take the view that a student needs support in excess of that which will be funded by Student Finance. Students should speak to their course providers once an assessment has taken place to see if there is additional support that they will provide beyond that funded by DSA. Providers may provide this additional support as they may conclude that they are obliged to do so as a reasonable adjustment pursuant to the Equality Act 2010.

## **REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS: EQUALITY ACT 2010**

11. Institutions providing postgraduate studies leading to qualification for the Bar will be covered by the obligation to make reasonable adjustments contained in s.91(9), of the Equality Act 2010.
12. If a student has a disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) that places them at a disadvantage in their studies the course provider is under an obligation to take such steps as are reasonable to lessen or remove that

disadvantage. This may mean that the institution will need to provide certain facilities, assistive technology or other support services to that student.

13. It is best for students with disabilities to discuss their need for reasonable adjustments with their institution as soon as possible. Do not assume that an adjustment will be made without it being asked for.

## **ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP**

14. The Bar Council cannot give legal advice. In the first instance, if you need support or assistance please contact your course provider/your Inn.

15. The following organisations can provide also advice and assistance too:

- Disabled Students Helpline operated by Disability Rights UK:  
T: 0330 995 0414  
E: [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)
  
- Student Finance England  
T: 0300 100 0607  
W: [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas)
  
- Student Finance Wales  
T: 0300 200 450  
W: [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)