

## Student Support

During your time at the Voice Study Centre, you will have access to a range of support systems. This document highlights the types of support offered to ensure your study time with us is positive.

Our student support hub is a crucial resource, providing comprehensive details of the services available to you. It serves as a roadmap for your journey, clearly outlining how and when we can assist you.

### The Application Process

As part of our proactive approach, we encourage you to declare any disabilities, neurodivergent issues, or other complex needs in your application form. This allows us to prepare and implement necessary systems well in advance of your studies. We will also **interview** you, which gives us an opportunity to explore your needs further and build strategies to prepare you for study. Here are some of the ways we can help:

- **Neurodivergent Assessment**

Many of our students are neurodivergent and we celebrate the positives that diversity brings. As we garner an increased understanding of neuroscience and learning, it is vital that we are all aware of the challenges that can arise. We are proud to offer access to a profiler system that comprehensively assesses individual learning needs. Profiler considers the Neurodivergent traits associated with Dyslexia, ADHD, ASC, Dyspraxia/DCD, Dyscalculia and social and communication challenges, along with understanding any study skills gaps, suggesting personalised strategies for university and at home, aiding well-being. Neurodivergent traits often overlap and not everyone fits into a neat box. Once you have accepted our offer, we can assess you appropriately and build a study strategy appropriate for your needs.

- **Disability and Financial Support**

As a postgraduate student, you can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) to cover some of the extra costs you incur due to a mental health condition, long-term illness, or any other disability.

You can receive DSA in addition to other student finance and it does not affect any other UK Government benefits you are entitled to. You will not need to repay DSA.

It could help you cover the costs of additional support, such as a non-medical helper or major items of specialist equipment.

In order to get Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), you need to apply to your funding body.

If you are a self-funded postgraduate student, then apply to Student Finance England. There are certain criteria you need to meet in order to apply to Student Finance England.

You can do this before you start your course or as a current student:

Student Finance England: <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

Student Finance Wales: <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/postgraduate-finance/>

Student Awards Agency Scotland: <https://www.saas.gov.uk/guides/dsa>

Student Finance Northern Ireland: <https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/>

- **DSA Application Information**

**Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)** are funds that disabled students can apply for to give them the extra financial support they need whilst studying. The allowance is divided into four components:

*Equipment Allowance:* this can cover hardware (computer, laptop, printer), assistive software (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, mind-mapping), ergonomic equipment (chairs, adjustable desks, wrist rests) or any other physical item that may be required to assist with accessing your course.

*Non-Medical Helper Allowance:* this is for human support and can cover specialist skills support, mentors, BSL interpreters etc.

*General Allowance:* this can cover consumables and other items not covered by the other allowances.

*Travel Allowance:* this can cover the additional costs in travelling between a student's term-time address and the university campus which are incurred due to disability. For example, if you need to use a taxi instead of a bus then this allowance will reimburse the difference in cost.

The DSA does not cover costs that all students on your course incur, or costs that you would incur if you were not studying. It can only cover costs that you incur as a result of your disability in accessing your course.

The DSAs are attached to the course you are studying. If you complete the course and decide to take up another course you can apply for a DSA for that course.

The funding does not affect any other benefits you may receive.

If you are eligible for DSA and your funding body has asked you to book an Assessment of Need, you will need to book an appointment via the Cambridge Assessment Centre. They can assess you in person or remotely <https://cambridgeaccesscentre.com/>. The centre has specialist, unbiased advice between 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday. You can telephone them or contact them via email:

Telephone: 01223 223701

Email: [dsa@cambridgeaccesscentre.com](mailto:dsa@cambridgeaccesscentre.com)

When you have booked your appointment, you will need to provide the following to the Access Centre:

- copy of your evidence
- copy of the letter from your funding body confirming your need for an assessment
- They may also ask you to complete a self-assessment document prior to the appointment.

The fee for your Assessment of Need will be deducted from your DSA and your funding body will pay the Access Centre directly.

- **About the assessment**

Students are often anxious about the assessment process. Please don't be! This is not a test or an examination; it is a meeting with a friendly and knowledgeable assessor who will identify useful study strategies to help you deal effectively with the curriculum in light of your disability.

They will be able to introduce and demonstrate to you, a range of equipment and adaptive computing hardware and software. You will have the opportunity to discuss any particular difficulties you have accessing your course.

The assessor will write all their recommendations for support in a report which will include quotes from suppliers of specialist equipment. A copy of the report will be sent to you and your funding body (usually within ten working days) and, with your permission, the University.

Once approved, your funding body should then contact you. How long this takes depends on the time of year and how busy they are. If you don't hear within four weeks, we recommend you contact them to check on the progress of your application. They will confirm the recommendations they have approved and advise you how to order equipment and arrange support.

If you require further assistance to complete the DSA form, please contact our Head of Student Services – [Tracy@voicestudycentre.com](mailto:Tracy@voicestudycentre.com)

### **During the course**

You may be unaware of neurodivergent issues that could impede your learning at the application stage. Neurodivergent people are very often highly functional, creative, and able to excel in many areas of their lives. They manage the challenges very well and may even be unaware of them. If you discover that you are experiencing difficulties during your studies, we will be able to provide an assessment and, from there, assist you in building learning strategies. We provide continued access to our support structures in the following ways:

- **Regular personal tutoring contact**

Our student support services are separate from the academic team. Our module leaders are there to support your academic needs and our support team is there for you to raise any personal or emotional challenges. Their contact details are available on the Student Support Hub on Canvas, and you will be introduced to them at induction. They will also reach out to you every *four to six* weeks by email to see if you are working effectively. You will have an opportunity to speak confidentially to them so that they can resolve any problems that you encounter.

Our personal support staff are in a continuous cycle of communication with the academic team, and it may be necessary to embed additional support into your programme.

- **Additional learning support**

Additional support may consist of specialised one-to-one support provided by our learning support team. They can schedule one-to-one sessions via Zoom for students anywhere in the world. It may also consist of additional academic support delivered by your academic lead. You may be given structured deadlines and increased mentoring for example.

- **Mental Health Support**

We provide access to a 24-hour helpline that can be accessed throughout the course of your study. Please be assured that it exists independently of the Voice Study Centre and is run entirely by fully trained counsellors. Where you have acute mental health difficulties, they will be able to assess you

and offer six counselling sessions as part of your contract with us. The number is available on the Student Hub tile.