

Support and Adjustments for blind and partially sighted students

Support for students who are blind or partially sighted

This document aims to inform you of the support and adjustments that the University can provide, as well as support that should be sourced from other organisations/agencies. To ensure success at university, it is important that you assess and plan for the support you will need, while also communicating your needs to us.

From your academic school or department

Automatic/standard adjustments

- Permission to record lectures for your own use subject to the University's [recording policy](#)
- Class handouts will be available at least 48 hours in advance (where possible) for you to download from [Blackboard](#) (the University's Virtual Learning Environment)
- Access to material in different formats via [Blackboard](#) (for example digital Braille, descriptions of pictures or graphs used)
- As much advance notice as possible about field trips or practical sessions
- Reading lists will be available before the module begins via the University's online reading list system [Talis Aspire](#)
- Prioritised reading lists
- As much advance notice as possible about group work, presentations or irregular teaching sessions (e.g. field trips or practical sessions which are not a regular feature of the course)
- Clear marking criteria

Adjustments which may be available on request

We recommend you meet with a Disability Adviser to determine which further adjustments you could qualify for and need. Unless they conflict with course requirements, adjustments in the following areas may be considered where appropriate:

- Field trips or practical sessions. For example, advance notice and discussion of your specific needs
- Lab practicals. For example, additional practical assistance in lab work, in consultation with DAS
- Exemption from being asked to read aloud

- In conjunction with the Disability Advisory Service, help, advice and liaison with compulsory work placement providers regarding your disability-related needs

From the Disability Advisory Service (DAS)

We can meet with you individually to discuss what support would be helpful to you. We can offer:

- Help with the registration process to bring your Assistance Dogs UK registered guide dog to university. See the [Assistance and Therapy Animals Policy](#) for further information
- Exam provisions may be agreed by DAS and the Examinations Office where appropriate. These will vary but may include extra time, use of a PC with specialist software, readers, scribes or rest breaks where appropriate
- Advice on applying for the Disabled Students Allowances
- An opportunity to attend our Induction Day in the summer before you arrive. This will offer the chance to meet other new students, give further advice on university life, and the opportunity to meet and discuss your needs individually with a Disability Adviser
- An orientation buddy or social mentor to help you attend key events and join clubs and societies
- An Academic Mentor to help you with planning your academic work and time management, liaising with the department where necessary. This is usually a post-graduate student
- Liaison with your department, with your consent, to help them understand what you find helpful. When you meet with your Disability Adviser, an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) can be completed

Accommodation

Student halls of residence offer opportunities for a communal living experience. Students have their own study bedroom and share a kitchen with between 6 – 12 other students. You may also share a bathroom with 6 – 10 other students, or you can apply for a room with an en-suite shower room.

You can find more information about individual halls on our [accommodation web pages](#). We would encourage you to book to see one of our Disability Advisers, who, with advance notice, can arrange for you to visit halls.

- If you have specific accommodation needs relating to your disability, please explain these on your application for halls to ensure your disability-related needs are prioritised. For example, you may request a hall close to the centre of campus, a ground floor room, an en-suite room, a hall with fewer people sharing a kitchen or bathroom, or a particular type of hall
- If you wish to bring your Assistance Dogs UK registered guide dog to university, please mention this on your application form and ensure that you have registered with the Disability Advisory Service

- Once you have applied for halls, your application for a halls place in year 1 will be prioritised if you need to live in halls for a reason related to a disability or medical condition. This does not necessarily guarantee you a place, but does give you priority over other students
- An Accommodation Contribution may be payable where you have specific accommodation needs in halls of residence, and these incur an additional cost. Check the [Accommodation Contribution eligibility](#) pages for qualification criteria, the rate of contribution and how to apply
- Should you wish to explore alternatives to halls, you can see information on the [Students' Union Advice pages](#)

Additional support you can apply for

Disabled Students Allowances from your funding body

To ensure access and success on your course we recommend you apply for the [Disabled Students Allowances](#) (DSA). Applicants need to have been resident in the UK for 5 years before starting their studies. Successful applicants may be eligible for the following support:

- Help towards the cost of a laptop computer
- Specialist software (e.g. screen-reading software such as Jaws or Dolphin Supernova, or screen magnification software)
- Notetaking support. This may be notetaking software and a digital voice recorder, or a human notetaker depending on your needs
- Professional mobility trainer
- Sighted guide to help learn routes around campus and the area
- 1-1 Study Skills sessions (often weekly). Personal, tailored support to help with time management, essay writing skills, and reading and exam preparation strategies

If you apply for DSA, your funding body will give you instructions on how to book a needs assessment, where an independent assessor will discuss your needs with you, determining your individual package of support. Most students who are blind or partially sighted will receive valuable support if they apply.

DSA applications take a few months to process, so we recommend you apply around the Easter before you arrive. Check the [DSA](#) link for more details.

Non-UK students

If you are an EU or international student, we recommend you check with your sponsor or student finance authority in advance, as they should be funding additional support needed.

Self-funded students who may need additional support should provide evidence and discuss any needs in advance with the [Disability Advisory Service](#). A Disability Adviser will assess your needs and discuss with you how these can be addressed. It is important

to note that adjustments beyond the 'automatic/standard adjustments' listed above can take some time to put in place, so early conversation with the Disability Advisory Service is essential.

Support from other University services

As a student at The University of Reading, you will also have access to the following support services and facilities during your studies:

- [Welfare Team](#) to help you with any personal difficulties during your time at University
- [Support Centre](#) - the first port of call for any queries regarding your studies
- [Library Support](#) - both online, and via Academic Liaison Librarians
- [Students Union](#) provide a range of services including advice and student activities
- [Student Financial Support](#) for help with budgeting and unexpected financial hardship
- [Life Tools workshops](#) to ease your transition into university and enhance your university experience

Things to do now

1. Apply for [Disabled Students Allowances \(DSA\)](#) if you are a UK student. Speak to your sponsor or student finance authority to see what support is available if you are an international student.
2. When we write to you (usually the June before you arrive), please complete our online registration form and upload a doctor's letter confirming your degree of vision or sight loss. Please provide this in good time to ensure your adjustments are in place for the beginning of term and allow additional time if you need to get your assessment translated. Support is subject to the provision of satisfactory medical evidence.

Please note: Unexpected changes to services may be necessary due to the challenges of the Coronavirus and the need to reduce risks to students and staff. However, the Disability Advisory Service will always continue to deliver key services remotely where possible.