# Support for autistic students

The aim of this information sheet is to tell you more about the support available to autistic students at the University of Leeds.

## Registering with Disability Services

In order to access any of the support listed below, you will need to register with Disability Services. To do this, you will need to complete our short [online Sign Up form](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000033/how_to_access_support/1065/setting_up_your_support), and send us [sufficient evidence](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000033/how_to_access_support/1092/providing_your_evidence). Registering with us will enable us to set up your support and agree adjustments to your learning and teaching, as indicated below. You only need to register with us once, and you can do so at any point during your studies.

## Transition support for applicants and new starters

We run a series of Service Information Days over the summer months which give students an opportunity to visit Disability Services, find out more about the Service, obtain assistance with any paperwork or processes, have an accessible tour of campus, and meet other students.  You are welcome to attend one of these Information Days, and we send information out to applicants in April with information on how to book. We also produce a [Prospective Student Handbook](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10710/disability_services/1162/disability_services_at_leeds) which will tell you more about Disability Services and the support we offer.

Once you arrive in Leeds, we can arrange orientation support to assist with the busy first weeks, including Intro Week (Freshers’ Week). To access this support, you need to be [registered with us](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000033/how_to_access_support/1065/setting_up_your_support) and contact us over the summer months before you start so that we can arrange your support.

All academic departments also run their own induction events aimed at supporting students in making the transition to university.  If you are planning to live in University Accommodation (Halls), there will also be welcome activities which take place within your accommodation, supported by the residential team.  You will be sent information via email about these activities before you arrive in Leeds.

## Exam arrangement recommendations

It is common for autistic students to have exam arrangements. You may have accessed exam arrangements at school or college, such as extra time. We can recommend similar and additional [exam access arrangements](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000032/support_for_disabled_students/817/alternative_exam_arrangements) including extra writing time, sitting your exams in a smaller room, working with a familiar invigilator, having regular breaks, or sitting your exams in a familiar venue. You can tell us about any exam arrangements you’ve had in the past when you complete our Sign Up form, and we will contact you about these recommendations when you complete our registration process.

## Support Summary Sheets

Once you have registered with us, we will create a Support Summary Sheet. This is a document which gives an overview of your disability and the impact it has on your studies, based on the information you give on your Sign Up form, your disability evidence, and our discussions with you.

The Support Summary Sheet lists key recommendations for adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment. These might include receiving lecture materials in advance, consideration around extensions and attendance, adjustments to group or lab work, support on placement, written instructions, adjustments to oral presentations, targeted reading lists and access to additional clarification and guidance. It will be sent to academic and support staff in your School and shared only with those responsible for teaching or supporting you during your studies.

## University reasonable adjustments

In addition to the Support Summary Sheet you may be given a package of support and adjustments from the University which could include the following:

* Permission to record teaching sessions
* Access to private accessible study rooms in the Library
* Access to loaned equipment and specialist software
* Support from the Assistive Technology Advisor
* Ongoing support throughout your studies from the Disability Advisory Team, including access to drop-ins and longer guidance appointments
* Access to our low sensory Quiet Room, located in Disability Services

## Funded one to one support

You may be recommended specialist one to one support for the duration of your studies. The most common type of support for autistic students is a Specialist Mentor. A Specialist Mentor will assist you with managing and maintaining your studies.  Mentors can also provide support with organisation, time management, liaising with key contacts, communication, planning, breaking work down and navigating university processes.  Mentors are available to students during Intro Week (Freshers’ Week) to assist with transition and accessing events during this busy period on campus.  Where possible, you will work with one Mentor for the duration of your studies.

You may also be recommended a Specialist One to One Study Skills Tutor who will assist you in identifying and developing key study skills at university level. This might include developing strategies for effective notetaking, structuring written work, writing in an academic style, referencing, revision and exam techniques. Where possible, you will work with one Study Skills Tutor for the duration of your studies.

Depending on your circumstances, you may also be recommended a note-taker, a personal assistant for practical tasks, or specialist assistance for practical sessions.

## Specialist equipment, software and training

You may be recommended specialist equipment and software as part of your funding application. This might include a digital voice recorder, mind mapping software, text to speech software or the Brain in Hand autism support app. If you do not own one already, you may be recommended a laptop, but you will need to pay the first £200 towards this. If you are recommended any software, you will also have access to installation support and training.

## Funding for support, equipment, software and training

In order to access funded support, equipment, software and training, you will need to apply for disability-related funding.  For most UK-based taught students (e.g. undergraduates and taught postgraduates) this will come from Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSA), which is government funding made available to disabled students and their institutions in order to pay for disability support.  The application for DSA includes a full Study Needs Assessment in order to establish your requirements, and to make recommendations for support, equipment, software and training.  There is [further information about DSA](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000031/disability_funding_and_finance/726/funding_for_disabled_students) on our website. It can take up to 15 weeks to complete the DSA application, so you are advised to start the process as soon as possible. We can support you with your application, and we may be able to arrange interim funding for support if your DSA funded support isn’t in place for the start of your studies.

If you are a research postgraduate funded by a Research Council, the Research Council will pay for your support. Please contact us if this applies to you as we will need to apply for Research Council Disabled Students’ Allowances on your behalf. We will work with your department to put support in place.

If you are not eligible for Disabled Students’ Allowances, the University will provide funding for a Study Needs Assessment and will pay for any equipment or support that is recommended. Your [Disability Coordinator](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000032/support_for_disabled_students/1197/disability_advisory_team) can arrange this for you.

We appreciate that funding can be complicated. If you’re not sure which funding you might be eligible for, you can check our [funding pages](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/1000031/disability_funding_and_finance/726/funding_for_disabled_students), or contact us.

## School support

Each academic School at the University has a [Disability Contact](https://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/21810/disabled_students/838/disability_contacts_in_schools). This is a member of staff within the School who is responsible for collating and sharing information about disabled students and ensuring that the recommendations we make are put in place. You can contact your School Disability Contact with any queries or concerns you have about your course, the teaching delivery or your assessments, or any other adjustments you need when studying.

## Accommodation support

As a disabled student, you will have access to priority registration for accommodation throughout your studies. You will be able to talk with [Accommodation Services](https://accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/) about any additional requirements you have for accommodation, such as en suite facilities, or close proximity to campus.

When you apply for accommodation, you should answer "Yes" to the question: "Do you require accommodation which is adapted or do you require a specific type of accommodation because of a disability/medical condition?"  You should also complete an [Additional Requirements form](http://accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/file/89/additional_requirements_form) so that Accommodation Services can try to match your requirements with the most suitable accommodation.

Each residence has one or more wardens and it's their job to help you with any problems. They hold advisory sessions each week during term time. Many residences also have resident sub-wardens - usually postgraduate or mature students. If, after you have moved into your accommodation, you find that a disability-related issue arises, please contact your warden, sub-warden or Accommodation Services to discuss this further.

## Support in Leeds

Many of our students make use of local support, including the [Leeds Autism AIM hub](http://leedsautismaim.org.uk/) which provides peer support, discussion groups, and practical workshops.  There are regular meetings each week a short walk from campus.  The Student Union also runs two student societies which may be of interest: the [Neurodivergent Society](https://www.luu.org.uk/clubs-and-societies/browse-clubs-and-societies/neurodivergent-society/), which welcomes all neurodivergent students, and the [Disabled Student Network](https://www.facebook.com/LeedsDisabledStudentNetwork/), in which many autistic students participate.

## Further information

If you have any questions about support for autistic students, or you would like to speak to someone about setting up your support, please contact us.

## Checklist

You can use this checklist to make sure that you have complete all the steps required to set up your support. It is not compulsory to complete this checklist, it is just there to give you a visual list to check against.

* Complete the Disability Services Sign Up Form
* Send evidence to Disability Services
* Read the Disability Services Prospective Student Handbook
* Book onto one of the Disability Services Information Days
* Apply for Disabled Students’ Allowances or talk with Disability Services about funding.
* Find out who your School Disability Contact is.
* Apply for Accommodation and complete the Additional Requirements form.
* Find out about Leeds Autism AIM, the Leeds University Union Neurodivergent Society and Disabled Student Network. Sign up if you are interested.
* Contact Disability Services if you have questions about your support at University.