



**KMPF**  
KENT & MEDWAY  
PROGRESSION  
FEDERATION



# The Guide: Support available for Disabled Students at University



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## Did you know?

UCAS received over **80,000** UK applicants who shared an impairment or condition in 2021

More than a **third (35%)** of disabled applicants shared a learning difference (e.g. dyslexia or dyscalculia)

There was a 105% rise in UCAS applications from disabled students between 2012 and 2021 and a **453% rise** for students sharing mental health conditions

*Statistics taken from UCAS report: Next Steps, what is the experience of disabled students in education? July, 2022*

# The Guide: Support available for Disabled Students at University

**What you can get and where to find it. A guide to the support available for disabled students at the universities in Kent and Medway.**

## Introduction

Thinking of university? Not sure if you'll get the support you need to help you succeed?

This is for you. Welcome to **The Guide**. This has been put together collaboratively between the Kent & Medway Progression Federation (KMPF) and the universities in Kent and Medway to show disabled people the array of support available at university.

Whether you have dyslexia, a hearing impairment, chronic illness,

a physical disability, experience mental health difficulties, and if you're diagnosed or not, there are teams of qualified professionals at university who are dedicated to empowering disabled students to succeed.

This guide has been created with the aim of addressing key concerns with applying to university as a disabled student. If you have any queries or if you would like this guide in a different format, please get in touch. You can email us at [SENDPP@kent.ac.uk](mailto:SENDPP@kent.ac.uk), phone 01227 922 565 or the **KMPF website**.

## About KMPF

KMPF works to support the aspirations and attainment of young people in Kent and Medway. Forming a core part of KMPF's mission is the Special Educational Needs and Disability Progression Partnership (SEND PP). SEND PP is a partnership of organisations committed to improving the post-16/18 education and career opportunities of disabled students in Kent and Medway. Our partners include Student Ambassadors, the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christ Church University, the University for the Creative Arts, CXK and a range of other organisations dedicated to providing progression opportunities.

To find out more see visit the **KMPF website** or the **SEND PP pages**.



# The Basics: Applying to university, support and finance

**Deciding to apply to university is a huge decision and it raises so many questions. This guide takes an in-depth look into the offers at each university in Kent and Medway, but what about those initial questions that apply to the whole process?**

**Wherever you're thinking of applying to, here's a quick overview of those broader questions you may have:**

## Applying

Before applying to any university, it's strongly recommended to attend an open event. Some universities also offer virtual tours, so if attending in person isn't possible, you can still get a feel for the layout and atmosphere of the setting.

Open events are the perfect opportunity to see the university first-hand and picture yourself studying there. You can meet academic staff, other students and ambassadors and find out more about the university than you would researching online. Head to page 30 for our suggested questions to take to open events.

When you have decided where to apply to, this process is completed through UCAS. There will be an option on the form to share that you have a disability. By ticking this box, the teams in the universities will be able to begin the process of putting in place the support you're entitled to. If you wait until you're at university to let them know you have a disability, there could be a delay in you receiving support and financial aid.

### Applying: Key points

- **Go to open events**
- **Ask lots of questions!**
- **Share that you have a disability on your UCAS form**



## Support at university

Many people worry that once they go to university, all the support they received at school or college will stop. There are whole teams at universities dedicated to offering disability and wellbeing support, plus networks and social groups for additional support and friendship. The wording used by support teams will be different from school, so head to page 35 to see our terminology guide.

### Support: Key points

**There are whole teams at universities dedicated to offering support to students.**

**A formal diagnosis isn't always needed, you can still access support at university.**

## Finance

The financial implications of studying at university can be a huge area of concern. Students can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan and a Maintenance Loan. The loan does not need to be repaid until you are earning over a specific amount, and the repayments are automatically taken as a small percentage of your income.

Visit the **Government's student finance website** for up-to-date information by scanning the QR code above.

The student finance calculator is a handy tool that works out what you're entitled to. It may be that you can also apply for additional grants or allowances that don't need to be repaid. **Click here for the student finance calculator.**

### Finance: Key points

**Get what you're entitled to!**

**You begin to pay back any student finance once you start working. A small percentage of your salary will be deducted each month.**

**Share that you have a disability on your UCAS form.**

## Disabled Students' Allowance

When you apply to university you can also apply for the **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**. DSA provides financial support to assist students with study-related costs. DSA can help with costs of specialist equipment, in-person support, travel, and other disability-related support. Please note this list is not exhaustive and is subject to change. All students will not be entitled to all examples of support given.

You don't need to have been offered a place on a course to begin the application process. DSA is available to financially support students with any additional costs they may incur as a student.

You can get DSA on top of other student finance, and **you will not need to repay DSA**. The DSA is not means-tested or based on household income.

## DSA: The Process

There are various assessment centres across the UK that can support the DSA application process. We've worked with A2B Assessments who have created the application process on the next page, but to find out about other centres, please visit [the Government's website for DSA Assessment Centres](#).



***It's better to have the support in place and not need it, than need it and not have it.***

Helen Childs, Head of Disability,  
SpLD and Neurodiversity at the University of Kent.

# Applying for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

Ok, let's get started!

## 1 Learn

Find out about Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA):  
What is it?  
Who can get it?  
What support does it cover?



## 2 Prepare

Before you apply you'll need:  
Evidence about your disability or condition. To find your funding body visit the Government's student finance website.



## 3 Apply

Fill out the application and send your evidence to your funding body. They'll either tell you to book a needs assessment or provide more evidence.



## 4 Book

Book online or call us on 020 330 10236 to arrange your assessment. We'll try to see you as quickly as possible, usually within three days.



## 5 Assessment

You'll have a phone, video or in-person chat with a friendly A2B needs assessor. This will last about one and a half to two hours. Together, we'll agree what support we think you need.



## 6 Report

After your assessment, we'll write a report about your needs. We'll send it to your funding body within 10 working days.



## 7 Approval

You'll get an email from the funding body within four weeks. The email will confirm what support you'll get, and let you know about your approved suppliers.



## 8 Support

You'll need to contact the suppliers to get your equipment or support. Your support lasts until you end or leave your course. If your support needs change, please contact us.



All done!



### Questions?

You can get in touch with our lovely team over at [admin@a2bassessments.com](mailto:admin@a2bassessments.com)



A2B Assessments

# The Universities in Kent and Medway



## Canterbury Christ Church University

### About the University

Canterbury Christ Church University is a multi-site university in the centre of Canterbury, with additional campuses in Medway and Tunbridge Wells.

#### Number of students

11,130

#### Location(s)

Canterbury, Medway and Tunbridge Wells

#### Number and percentage of disabled students\*

1,818 (16%)

### Support available

Canterbury Christ Church University has an experienced and friendly team dedicated to providing support to students. The Student Wellbeing Service offers advice, information and practical help to put in place the support that can help you during your time at university. The service is split into three teams:

- Student Disability Team (e.g., disability support, dyslexia screening and DSA process).
- Mental Wellbeing Team (e.g., mental health, wellbeing and counselling).
- Student Support Team (e.g., finance, accommodation, budgeting, and academic issues).

*\*Students who have shared with the university that they have a disability, on their UCAS form. There are more students who have chosen not to share or share after starting their course.*





## Before applying

The team at Canterbury Christ Church University recommends booking online for a campus tour before you apply. Seeing a university first-hand is the ideal opportunity to get a feel for the environment, ask lots of questions (see our template on page 30 for questions to ask), and see if you can imagine yourself studying there.

You can also book to meet the Student Wellbeing Service and the team(s) relevant to you. You can make contact as early as you wish; some students make contact a year before even applying to university.

When completing your UCAS application, it is highly recommended that you share that you have a disability. You will then receive an automated email inviting you to register with the Student Wellbeing

Services. After registering, you will be invited for an initial meeting with the team so they can start to prepare everything before you begin your studies.

## Transition into university

You will be invited to an orientation day before the first term in September officially starts. Parents/carers are welcome to join, or if preferred you can come independently. This is an informal day run by the Student Disability and Mental Wellbeing Teams and will include a range of guests who can answer your questions on accommodation, the library, student facilities and other elements of student life. You will have the opportunity to stay to watch a film and have pizza afterwards.

To support transitioning into the university setting, you will also

be able to get settled into your accommodation slightly earlier than most students.

## Ongoing support

Working with the Student Wellbeing Service, you will receive a Learning Support Plan (LSP), which is similar to an Individual Learner Plan (ILP) at school. This will include arranging any reasonable adjustments that will need to be made for you to fully access your studies and assessments.

The Student Wellbeing Service is part of the university community and you will be able to access the service at any point during your time at Canterbury Christ Church University. We also have DSA application drop ins, virtual and in-person drop ins, and an open-door policy for any ad-hoc queries and support.

## Top tips

- **Share that you have a disability on your UCAS application**
- **Contact us before you start your course so we can begin to put support in place**
- **Having a confirmed diagnosis will mean you can apply for DSA**

## Further information

### Canterbury Christ Church University website

[disability@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:disability@canterbury.ac.uk)

[mentalwellbeing@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:mentalwellbeing@canterbury.ac.uk)

Visit our Disability and Mental Health webpage for further information, take a virtual tour of the university, and see our top tips.



## **i** Did you know...?

Almost 1 in 5 applicants to Canterbury Christ Church University tell us that they have a disability on their application form.



## Student stories: Alice at Canterbury Christ Church University

“ I always wanted to go to university, it seemed like the best route to get me into the type of work I want to do. I went to a lot of open events and eventually chose Canterbury Christ Church University. It’s a great location and everything I could need is on my doorstep, but also it was the only university that clearly explained to me all the support I’m entitled to, so that eventually swung my decision.

I found out about the support on offer at the open event. There was a stand for the Student Wellbeing Service so I spoke to them directly about what support is in place. They told me about Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA), learning support plans, adapted accommodation and other support specific to my needs. The university’s Student Wellbeing Service also has drop ins daily, so any time I need information or advice I know where to go.

My advice to anyone in school or college would be to build strong links with your teachers, they’re going to be the ones helping you with your statement and providing your reference, so it’s important they know you well.

My biggest fear about going to university, which I think is the same for a lot of people, was making friends. You’re in a new place with new people, and I thought university would be a case of going to lectures then going back home. This isn’t the reality of university life at all! Before starting the course, the university put everyone on my course in touch through an induction forum and on Facebook. From that, we set up a WhatsApp group so we could all start to get to know each other. A group of us also decided to walk in together on our first day, so that took away a lot of first-day jitters. I made my best friend on that day, and after our first lecture we all went to the park together and just hung out for the afternoon. It turned out I had nothing to worry about with meeting people and making new friends at university! I’ve made friends for life here.

Another worry for me was how I was going to get around. For me, finding my way means finding the lifts but it was all absolutely fine. Every building I’ve needed to use has been fully

accessible. My lecturers have also been supportive and always make sure to book a room I can get to and that has space for me.

Alongside the day-to-day support from my lecturers, I have a learning support plan. This means I can get extensions if I'm feeling over-tired towards the end of term, and I get extra time for in-person exams (some are done online so we have 24 hours to complete them). For outings and trips we talk about any potential issues to make sure I can access the visits, and lectures are always recorded so if I (or anyone) can't get to the lecture in person they can still access it.

On a personal level, my biggest challenge has been coming to terms with my disability. I'm learning to accept the fact that there are going to be things that I find difficult, but that's ok and it doesn't need to be anything I worry about. The important people in my life know me for me. They know that if I am wobbling more, that's ok! They're the people I need to surround myself with.

In terms of my studies, the main challenge I have is early starts. I get really tired if I have to wake up early, so morning lectures can be difficult. My lecturers know me so well and understand if I'm slightly late. They know that I work hard and I try my best, and if I can be there I'll be there. It's a mutual trust that we've built.

When I started university, I wanted to be a teacher; I wanted to build those relationships, change lives, and show young people early on in life that people with disabilities are 'normal'. I've found out more about the profession and now I feel it isn't the right path for me, but I definitely want to pursue a career working with young people. I either want to work somewhere like KMPF, or work with disabled adults to support them with finding meaningful careers.

My biggest piece of advice for prospective students is to be yourself! If someone doesn't understand or accept your disability, that's their problem. If you embrace your disability, you can get the support you need. I've learned to own my disability and accept that it's a part of me, and that's a good thing!





## University for the Creative Arts

### About the University

The University for the Creative Arts (UCA) is based in Canterbury, a short distance from the city centre. UCA specialises in creative courses in the arts, business and technology. UCA currently has around 6,000 students.

#### Number of students

5,344

#### Location(s)

Canterbury, Farnham and Epsom

#### Number and percentage of disabled students\*

1,644 (31%)

*\*Students who have shared with the university that they have a disability, on their UCAS form. There are more students who have chosen not to share or share after starting their course.*

### Support available

UCA has what's known as the Gateway Services. This is the first port of call for all support and acts as the central point to go to for all enquiries, advice and guidance. From the Gateway, students can receive support from our disability service, student wellbeing services, financial support, careers support, Library Liaison Tutors and other tailored support.

### Before applying

As with all universities, it's strongly recommended to visit the campus at an open event. This will enable you to see the university and the facilities on offer. For creative courses this is hugely important; seeing the studios, the equipment and technology on offer can be the deciding factor in choosing where to study. You can also contact Gateway Services to find out more about which support would be available, specific to your needs.

### Transition into university

When applying to UCA, if you have shared that you have a disability, a pre-entry questionnaire will be sent to you as part of your course offer. This questionnaire is used so we can work with you to create your Individual Learner Plan (ILP). The team is available over the summer holiday, so if you have any enquiries, someone

will be here to support you. It may be that you are entitled to priority for accommodation, so you can settle in before other students arrive. We also have applicant days, an induction week and an enrolment week to aid adjusting to the early days of university life.

## Top tips

- Give as much detail as you can (and are comfortable sharing). This will mean we can get you the support you're entitled to – it's yours to have so we want to make sure you get it
- Let us know if you receive any external support such as CAMHS; this will help us to better understand your needs

## Ongoing support

Within Gateway Services, UCA has specific disability and wellbeing teams. These teams of friendly, qualified professionals are here specifically to support and enable students. Our support is tailored to each student, so whether you need help with written aspects of your course, emotional support, assistive technology, or any other support with your learning, we are here to try to put that support in place.

## Further information

University for the Creative Arts  
website

[gatewaycanterbury@uca.ac.uk](mailto:gatewaycanterbury@uca.ac.uk)

Student Services at University for  
the Creative Arts



## **i** Did you know...?

We have members of staff here all summer, so if you have any questions, you can get in touch any time.



## Student stories: Kyle at UCA

“ I always wanted to be an animator and I knew that a certain level of education and experience would be needed, so university seemed like the best pathway for me. I didn't do too well in my A levels, but thankfully UCA could see my passion for the subject, so I was accepted on their Art Foundation course. I loved the course and wanted to continue to a degree at UCA. I'm now in my second year of a BA Illustration and Animation.

My route here was a bit unconventional. When I left school I went to a different university but it wasn't right for me. It was while on this course that I found out I have fibromyalgia, so I needed to be nearer to family. I researched universities in Kent and found the Foundation course at UCA was exactly what I was looking for.

When I applied to UCA I ticked the box to confirm I am disabled, which meant I was in contact with the support team before I even joined.

I was quite concerned about the financial aspects of studying, so we spoke about all the financial support I'm entitled to including DSA. While on my course I began to struggle with the workload so I met with the support team and they suggested a screening, which eventually led to a diagnosis for ADHD and dyslexia. Because of this I sought a lot more help in my second year, and this made such a difference to my learning. I now receive extensions on all my work, and I meet with a member of the support team every week to look at my projects: what I have on, how we can manage my time and make sure I'm on top of everything. Together we go through all the work that's been set. This really helps to keep me on track and motivated, it's incredible. Any time I need support, I know I can go to them.

My biggest fear with going to university was the financial aspect. I was worried about whether going to uni would affect my family. The idea of paying back student finance can be quite daunting but talking to the support staff and going through all the options available really helped. I didn't realise that most universities have support systems in place and people employed specifically to help with things like DSA, student finance and Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

My other concern was my grades as I've never been good at exams. The support staff have helped me so much; I get extra time, extra support, and there's always someone I can contact. I'm always quite surprised when people just say they'll support me and figure it out. I never expected so much help, they genuinely want me to succeed and to do the best I can. Having my tutors aware of my disability has been a huge help. If I can't come in for a lecture they're supportive and check I'm still ok with the work. Lectures are also recorded so I can always come back and watch them another time.

It can feel embarrassing to say you have a disability, but letting people know is the most important thing. You're going to have these issues, but no support can be put in place without communication. All my diagnoses were within 3 years of each other, and I realised I have to live with this, so how do I make it as easy as possible? Let people know about your needs, and then someone will do something to help you. The main thing is to communicate, talk to as many people at the uni as possible. All it takes is one person doing the right thing once in order for

it to all to fall into place. One person to say "it's ok, I hear you" is literally all it takes. It can be the difference between struggling and succeeding.

The most enjoyable aspect of uni has been the people. It's so different from school, I'm studying alongside people who genuinely want to be there and are passionate about what they're studying. It's fascinating to see how we all interpret topics differently and talking to people in the industry and my tutors about their professional experience is always so interesting. My tutor has worked on Marvel and DC Comics, it's mind blowing!

When I finish my course, I'd love to work in TV and film animation. I've always loved cartoons, and I want to use animation to be part of the movement that tells young people that who they are is ok, to be yourself. There are animated shows that delve into topics about being different from others, and I want to be there for the next generation of children. To show them new characters with new perspectives. I think that can be so powerful.





## The University of Kent

The University of Kent is based in Canterbury and Medway, with more than 17,000 students currently enrolled. The Canterbury campus is surrounded by beautiful woodlands and overlooks the city, which is in walking distance and well connected by buses, while the Medway campus forms part of the Universities at Medway community, and is a vibrant mixture of modern and historic buildings, alongside the Historic Dockyard Chatham.

## About the University

### Number of students

17,638

### Location(s)

Canterbury, Medway, Paris, Brussels

### Number and percentage of disabled students\*

3,367 (19%)

*\*Students who have shared with the university that they have a disability, on their UCAS form. There are more students who have chosen not to share or share after starting their course.*

## Support available

The University of Kent's Student Support and Wellbeing services are part of Student Services, which also comprises College and Community Life, the Careers and Employability Service, Student Conduct and Complaints, Nursing Services and Chaplaincy.

There are more than 100 members of staff in the Student Support and Wellbeing team, including advisers, tutors and mentors, who are experts in disability, autism, specific learning difficulties, accessible information and mental health.

Students are invited to register with the Student Support and Wellbeing team at any point during their academic journey, including pre-arrival, in order to arrange support such as adjusted course or exam arrangements, or issues that arise as they progress such as feeling overwhelmed by academic work. The university also has an Accessible Information team that provides digital and alternative resources and supports the use of assistive technology to remove barriers to learning, and to help all students work and study smarter.

Students at Kent can also access a free confidential counselling service at any time during their studies for a safe space to explore and re-balance thoughts, feelings and behaviours.



## Before applying

We strongly recommend sharing your condition on your UCAS application form. However, if you would rather not, you can email us directly and we can arrange your support. In order to provide support as efficiently as possible, we also recommend an up-to-date letter from your GP with a summary of your condition and a brief outline of how it affects you. You can also apply for DSA before starting your course, and you can contact us before starting so we can start to put together your Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP).

If you have a social worker, it is also advised to keep them notified of any changes to your personal circumstances. If you need support for aspects of university life that are not linked to your course e.g. for shopping or doing laundry, this will need to be arranged via your social

worker or local authority. The key factor is to start early with arranging all support so it's more likely to be in place as early as possible.

## Transition into university

We offer orientation and transition events specifically for autistic students, orientation support for those who are visually impaired or have other sensory or motor impairments, providing an opportunity to visit and familiarize yourself with the environment prior to the start of the academic year. We can meet students before they arrive, and we contact all students prior to starting their course to arrange their meeting with a Student Support and Wellbeing Adviser. We encourage students to register with the service during the summer before they enrol so we can begin to arrange the support.

## Ongoing support

Alongside the support outlined above, we have 24/7 support from NHS Nursing Services, an NHS Medical Centre on site and wellbeing events throughout the year. Our peer-led support groups and College and Community Life Team support students to make friends, to settle in and feel part of the community.

All students who have shared their disability or mental health details are invited to make an appointment with a specialist adviser, who can meet with them and discuss creating an ILP. The ILP supports all learning during their time at Kent, including exams, timetabling, academic support and access to support staff. Advisers can also screen\* for certain disabilities including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.

\*Depending on circumstances and requirements, there may be a charge for certain screenings

## Further information

### University of Kent's Student Support website

Canterbury campus:

KentSSW@kent.ac.uk

Medway campus:

MedwaySSW@kent.ac.uk

Follow @UniKentSSW on Instagram



## Top tips

- **If you'd rather not share on your application form that you are disabled, you can contact us directly**
- **Talk to an Adviser about your specific requirements so we can do our best to tailor support to you**

## **i** Did you know...?

- **We have adapted accommodation at all our locations**
- **We are open throughout Easter and Summer vacations, only closing for a week at Christmas, so you can access support all year round**

## Student stories: Zara at the University of Kent

“ For a long time, university wasn't even an option for me. With all the challenges I had faced with my mental health and self-confidence, I never thought I could do it. However, I knew that the career I wanted to pursue would need a degree, so I took the first step to go to an open day.

I chose to study at the University of Kent for a multitude of reasons, the main one being that they had an array of support available for my needs. I struggle with anxiety so I was nervous about how much support would be available in higher education. I knew I wanted to attend a university that had various measures in place to support students with differing needs, so learning that Kent had a wellbeing service was a huge deciding factor for me. Another reason for choosing Kent is that it is close to home as moving away to university would have been too anxiety-inducing for me.

I found out about the support available through researching online and meeting different people at open events, including student ambassadors. They were very open

in sharing their experiences and gave me so much reassurance about the ways in which you can access support. Knowing this made me realise that reaching out and accessing the support isn't as daunting as I thought it would be.

My biggest fear about going to university was simply that I wouldn't be able to do it and that I would fail. I have faced challenges during my time at university, both personally and academically, but I have received so much support and guidance that I know that when I am struggling, there are people here to support me. It can seem that in university you are a lone wolf who must find their way through this new adventure completely independently, but this isn't the case!

I have received support through academic advisers, who I meet with to talk about any concerns or challenges. They can provide guidance themselves or point me in the direction of other resources to ensure I can overcome these barriers. I also have an ambassador mentor who meets with me regularly to see how I am doing in terms of my ambassador work and just generally within my personal life. The wellbeing service has provided me with various kinds of mental health support. I have a mental health adviser who checks



in regularly to see how I'm doing, and I was provided with 5 weeks of counselling when needed.

Most of the challenges I have faced have been directly linked to my mental health. The best way I have found to overcome and manage the challenges is to be open about what is going on. I let lecturers, seminar leaders and the wellbeing service know about my needs. This means that if there are ever times in which I may need support or to apply for an extension, everyone involved will be made aware and steps can be taken to ensure support is available. As well as this, one of the most important ways I look after myself is to simply listen to my mind and body and remember, university is not the most important thing, my health is.

The best thing about university has been seeing the person I have grown into. I love learning of course, but I have realised that the opportunities available at university such as my ambassador work and overcoming

academic challenges has really enabled me to grow and develop into somebody I never thought I would be. It is not just about academic achievements; it is more about the personal achievements I have made. I have faced so many of my fears and in doing so have been able to grow in confidence and be in a place that I never thought I could ever be in. I have also met and worked with so many people who have pushed me to be the best person I can be and for that I am so grateful!

My main piece of advice to others is to reach out! Higher education is challenging, and it is more than okay to admit that you would like some support for your needs. It can be incredibly daunting and can often feel like you are making yourself vulnerable, but trust me when I say, there is no shame in asking for help. The university is here for you! They want you to have the best experience possible. You are not a lone wolf, there are always others who are with you on this journey every step of the way.





## University of Greenwich

The University of Greenwich has almost 20,000 students enrolled across its campuses. The university is based in Greenwich and Eltham, London and in Medway, Kent.

### About the University

#### Number of students

Up to 20,000+  
(full time and part time)

#### Location(s)

Greenwich campus, London  
Avery Hill campus, London  
Medway campus

#### Number and percentage of disabled students\*

2,742 (full time and part time)  
11%

*\*Students who have shared with the university that they have a disability, on their UCAS form. There are more students who have chosen not to share or share after starting their course.*

### Support available

Anyone who has a disability, or a specific learning difficulty can register with the Student Wellbeing Service at any time during their studies at the university.

Our Student Wellbeing Coordinators review teaching and learning recommendations and discuss with you any other reasonable adjustments that you feel you require. Using this information your Greenwich Inclusion Plan will be created and shared with staff on a need-to-know basis.

The team also provides confidential one-to-one counselling and mental health advice for those that require it. The team can recommend screenings and provide financial support including grants for assessments (if eligible).

### Before applying

We highly recommend sharing that you have a disability when you apply. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments for our students to thrive. Letting us know you have a disability, specific learning difficulty, long-term medical condition, or mental health condition, means we can begin to plan your support before you start your course.

If you are invited to an interview or a selection test, you can request special arrangements or adjustments by contacting the individual(s) named in the invitation letter.

You might need to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) or to arrange any personal care or ongoing medical or mental health care needs with local services. There's no need to wait until you have a confirmed place, this can be done at the same time as applying to university and means it's more likely to be in place when you start your course.

If you accept an offer to study with us, it will also help if you email your medical evidence to [wellbeing@gre.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@gre.ac.uk) so the team can begin to prepare any support.

## Transition into university

To support transition, we work closely with STAART, the disability and diversity focused initiative at the university. STAART runs events to prepare students and support transition into university, including social events during summer. We have also launched an orientation support programme which includes familiarisation with the campus and settling in. More information about STAART can be found on page 26.

## Ongoing support

Our Student Wellbeing Service Coordinators provide ongoing, tailored support. The Student Wellbeing Service arranges in-class support for students that require it such as a study assistant or BSL interpreter.

We also offer Study Skills sessions for students receiving DSA. Alongside this we have a number of social groups and support networks.

## Further information

[wellbeing@gre.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@gre.ac.uk)

[University of Greenwich Support website](#)



## Top tips

**We strongly encourage applicants to share with us that they are disabled as soon as possible, preferably prior to starting. This will help us to arrange support and put into place reasonable adjustments that may be required.**

## Student stories: Zoe at the University of Greenwich

“ I always knew I wanted to follow a career in the science field. However, I didn't decide to study nutrition until college when my dad had surgery and had to make significant dietary and lifestyle changes. This led me to want to help people to understand and implement nutrition for their benefit. I was still unsure of the commitment a degree would require, but I went to an open event at the University of Greenwich and met one of the lecturers. She was brilliant and so encouraging, I even tried a practice session. It was a year or two later, after working in the NHS, that I decided I was ready for university.

A key factor for me with choosing Greenwich was the location. I have a child, so I didn't want to uproot my family. I also had a good feeling from the open event and from meeting Melanie Thorley, who manages STAART. Melanie explained to me all the support that was available to me and directed me to the wellbeing team to access it. It was only in the final year of my undergraduate degree I was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia.

My biggest fear with going to university was that I wouldn't pass; you could say it was a case of

imposter syndrome. When you walk into university you think you're going to be surrounded by high achievers, and as a mature student, I worried that everyone would be younger than me. I realised very quickly that everyone is in the same boat, we were all there just trying our best. Coincidentally, most people on my undergraduate course were mature students, too, so that was an unexpected bonus. We all supported each other and most of us are still in touch.

Success at university really depends on how committed you are. It can seem like for some people, everything comes easily, but I always had to work harder than others, which I learned is down to my dyslexia. I always work that bit harder and put in the extra time and effort so my disabilities don't affect my grades. STAART has also been a brilliant system that I could go to for advice and support. I've received wellbeing counselling, support from other STAART members, and it was through STAART that I was recommended an assessment for learning difficulties. Once I was diagnosed, I met with the wellbeing team again and we went through my assessment report, discussing what support the university could offer. Now I've applied for DSA, I have been able to get a number of support





aides, including a specialist chair for my hypermobility, a special desk with height adjuster, a specialist mouse, keyboard and headset, plus a laptop with software to support with reading and writing. I also have a dyslexia tutor who I meet with to look at my work, which is especially useful now I'm on a masters course and there are no exams, it's all graded on coursework.

The best thing about university has been the learning and the experiences the course has enabled. Alongside this, I've really enjoyed being part of STAART, working with SEND PP, and working as a course rep. It's great to know you can contribute to something positive alongside studying.

When I started my studies, I had a really clear pathway in mind, but during my degree I realised becoming a dietician was no longer right for me. Through trying all the different aspects of my course and different experiences, I've learnt to be more open minded. My masters course is so varied so it's broadened

my ideas of where I could go in the future. I might even do a PhD, I'd love to continue working in research.

My advice to others would be to go to universities and see them for yourself. Don't just base your decision on what you've heard from others, or the statistics. You might visit somewhere that has lower results or statistics, but you love it there and you know you'll succeed there. They need to meet your needs, and what you want from university. Go to open events – do you feel welcome? Find out everything you want to know and what matters to you, then make your decision based on that. I'd also say to tick the box on your application form to share that you are disabled; it'll make sure you get your support in place quicker than waiting until you've enrolled.

Some people worry that sharing their disability will affect their application. This really isn't the case – it is illegal for universities to discriminate based on a disability. You just have to choose the one that's right for you.



# STAART



**STAART (Support Through AccessAbility – Retention and Transition) supports students with a disability, long-term health condition, specific learning difficulty, and/or mental health condition to thrive at university. Complementing the support offered by the Wellbeing Team at the University of Greenwich, STAART is a community offering support, advice and guidance to anyone who identifies as disabled.**

## **What support can STAART offer?**

Going to university can be challenging for anyone. Students move from a highly structured school or college environment to organising their own studies and social lives.

For disabled and diverse university students, these challenges can be

more extensive, so preparation becomes even more important. STAART supports students through this transition.

Our STAART ambassadors – university students with their own disability or diversity – provide balanced, first-hand experience of the achievements and challenges of university life.

## How can I join in?

The perfect way to join the STAART community is on social media. Our STAART Facebook page has a wide range of members, both in the UK and abroad. Members include future and current disabled and dyslexic students, graduates, postgraduates, disability practitioners, charities, organisations, researchers, parents, and allies.

If you are aged 16 or above, you are welcome to join the group. You do not have to be a disabled student.

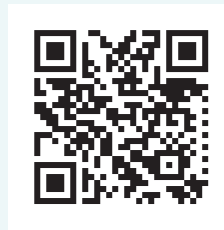
We use the page to share information, celebrate achievements and keep people updated with what is happening in the world which may affect our members. Search 'University of Greenwich – STAART' to find our page.

STAART is also on Twitter [@GRE\\_STAART](#) and has a monthly bulletin with updates, events and advice. Visit [the STAART community website](#) for more information and to sign up.

## Contact

The STAART website

Twitter: [@gre\\_staart](#)



**“ Having STAART during my degree was an immense support. It was like having cheerleaders all the way to the finish line. With every struggle, there was always someone there to give me support or listen to me. ”**

João Martins, BSc Psychology with Counselling



## **Student stories: Brad, STAART member and University of Greenwich student**

“ I didn't always want to go to university; before my stroke, I wanted to be a commercial pilot. I knew I wouldn't be able to pursue that anymore, but I fell in love with the idea of human biology and how you can help people recover from injury. I searched the different options and courses, and pursuing research seemed like the way for me to make the greatest impact, so university was the way forward.

Before I'd started my course the university contacted me because I'd ticked the box on my application form stating that I am disabled. They invited me in for a consultation before

my start date. This helped us put together a plan for me before I even started my studies. I didn't have a diagnosis for dyslexia and they recommended this so that I could apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). During freshers' week I bumped into Melanie Thorley, STAART Manager, and I've been part of STAART ever since.

Before starting at uni, my biggest fear was being alone. I know how to meet people and have a conversation, but in the back of my mind, I was worried about trying to build friendships with people who have interests that I can't engage with, such as sports. My main concerns were: would I meet people, and would they be nice? And I did, I met some great people. There's a real sense of community with STAART, we have a great time together.

I've received various types of support that have helped my studies. Counselling has been hugely beneficial, and I've also received cognitive behaviour therapy. Greenwich has an inclusion plan and it details to lecturers and other staff members what support and requirements are needed. I also got a support worker for exams and lectures, and reading and dictation software was also provided. On my PhD, I have a scientific support helper who comes to the lab with me.

STAART has been instrumental in a lot of this support. If you're in a community that supports you, you really can't go wrong. This has enabled me to be the best version of myself and to understand exactly what I need.

My advice to others: It's going to be hard. It's not easy, you're going to have to fight for things but at the

end of it, that last exam or when you hand in your dissertation, it's so worth it. As disabled people, we tend to find each other. There's a community there waiting for you. It's cheesy, but I'd say to follow your dream!



## STAART Principles of Disability (SPoD)

In December 2022, STAART launched the SPoD.

These principles have been created by self-selected University of Greenwich (UK) disabled students, disabled graduates, and disabled staff:

- 1 Disability includes physical impairments; specific learning difficulties (dyslexic and autistic spectra); mental health conditions; long-term health conditions; and/or potentially life-shortening illnesses.
- 2 We are not embarrassed and/or ashamed of our disabilities.
- 3 Some days are better than others.
- 4 Sometimes it may take us longer to work or study than our non-disabled peers, although sometimes we are quicker than our non-disabled peers to achieve the same results.
- 5 We are capable of great achievements.
- 6 Ninety-two per cent of our disabilities are not visible.
- 7 Disabled peers can be our greatest allies and successful supporters.
- 8 We are disabled people, not people with disabilities. We are (mostly) disabled by the environment and attitudes rather than our bodies and brains.
- 9 We are experts by experience (of our disability/disabilities).
- 10 We come in different shapes, sizes, colours, faiths, and genders.

If you have any questions about the SpOD please contact:  
Dr Melanie Thorley, STAART Manager ([M.Thorley@gre.ac.uk](mailto:M.Thorley@gre.ac.uk))

The SPoD will be revised in 2025

# Questions for open events

**Attending open events can be the make-or-break opportunity for deciding between universities. As soon as you arrive on campus, you'll get a feel for the atmosphere and whether the environment is right for you. There will be a lot to take in, so we've worked with Ambassadors across the universities in Kent and Medway to compile these questions to ask. These are the questions current students asked, wished they'd asked, and recommend prospective students to ask!**

Feel free to take this along to any open events, or if you'd like a PDF copy visit our website [www.kmpf.org](http://www.kmpf.org) or email [sendpp@kent.ac.uk](mailto:sendpp@kent.ac.uk).

## Meeting your needs

- How much experience does the university have of supporting people with similar needs to mine?
- What specific support is available for my needs?
- What evidence do I need to provide to access support?
- Are your staff members (outside of the wellbeing and support teams) trained in disability and mental health?
- Can I meet my lecturers before starting my course?
- How do I find the contact details for the course leader?

## Academic

- How is the course assessed e.g., written exams, presentations, dissertation?
- How is the course delivered, and is there any flexibility e.g. online access?

## Social

- What is there to do nearby?
- Is the area accessible?
- Does the university have any peer-led groups?
- How do I find out about social groups on offer?

## Accommodation

- How many rooms are available that meet my needs?
- How many of these rooms have en-suites?
- Is there a member of staff in halls for any issues that may arise?

## Employability and progression

What employability support does the university offer?

Is there any specific employability support for disabled students?

For more information and tips around preparing for open events, visit the UCAS website.

[Visit the UCAS website](#)



Use this space to write down any other questions you may want to ask at an open day...

# CXK's top tips for disabled students applying to university



**CXK is a charity committed to supporting individuals to develop the skills and confidence they need to secure sustainable employment, education or training, and improve their life chances.**

Here are the careers guidance top tips for applying to university, written by CXK's Chris Targett. Chris Targett is the CDI UK Careers Adviser of the Year 2021 and current Chair of the Careers Writers Association.

If you are considering university, it is worth remembering you have lots of options at Post-18 such as:

- Apprenticeships at Levels 2+
- Work-related training, which could include developing your own business
- Traineeships and volunteering, which could include a gap year/travel
- College – face-to-face or distance learning e.g., **the EKC Group's Digital Learn courses**
- Higher Education (full or part time), face-to-face or via distance learning at college or university.

You can choose to apply for a range of options to keep your choices open.

For work-based routes (including Traineeships, Volunteering & Apprenticeships) support is available via Supported Employment services, Inclusive Apprenticeships (**BASE website**) as well as the **Access to Work scheme**.



There is lots of support available to you, whichever path you choose. For university it is worth knowing:

- There is additional funding available for Higher Education (including distance learning), as well as practical assistance. Many universities have support schemes, mentoring and can provide allowances/adjustments for their courses. Have a chat with each university to see what is available.
- Some vocational courses within the professions, where you are responsible for the health & safety of others (such as training to be a doctor or nurse) require a fitness to practice assessment, which is worth being mindful of. It is a good idea to speak to each of the universities you are interested in and the support teams at each, to talk through what this entails for you. [Visit UCAS and fitness to practice.](#)
- For courses which involve lots of practical or active elements, speak to each university to check that they can make reasonable adjustments so you can access all elements of your course.

Some universities have quite old buildings so it's worth double checking whether lifts have been fitted if you need these.

- When exploring university societies, sports groups or similar, find out whether they run “disability friendly” events or have sports teams for disabled students. [BUCS](#) maybe able to help you research this
- It may also be important to you that the university you attend is LGBTQ+ friendly. This guide by Jude Hanley who is a member of the Careers Writers Association can help you explore this [Guide to find a LGBTQ+ friendly uni](#)
- When researching where you wish to study, check additional requirements such as reserved parking for those with disabilities and the availability of online/virtual counselling and tutor support.
- For those with autism there is a network of universities which have pledged to be supportive of ASC which may interest you:

Look at the ‘Ambitious about Autism’ website to find out more (Note: there are other universities not listed here, which can also provide similar support).

- For any course, it needs to be your voice in your personal statement – but grammar and punctuation do matter, so ensure these are triple checked by someone you trust. Tools such as **The Grammarly website** can help ensure your writing isn’t too informal and has a positive tone.
- When researching courses, listen to your head, heart, and gut instinct!

Good luck!



**For further top-tips,  
check out our CXC  
Resource Hub**

# Terminology guide

Terminology used between schools, colleges and universities can create an additional barrier to understanding what support is available. The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) has created this table outlining some of the differences between language used at school/college and university:

School terms	University terms	Notes
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Special Needs Special Educational Needs (SEN) Additional Needs	Disability Disabled	Universities do not use the term 'Special Educational Needs' as this is specific to schools and colleges. Instead, universities use the word 'disability'. This may feel unfamiliar, but the term 'disability' is broad and considers any physical, mental or sensory impairment which has a significant impact on daily life, and which is long term (i.e. lasts more than 12 months). For a student, daily activities might include taking notes, writing, researching, reading large amounts of text and moving between multiple locations. This includes people who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are D/deaf or hearing impaired</li> <li>• are blind or visually impaired</li> <li>• are physically disabled, and/or have mobility difficulties</li> <li>• have a specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)</li> <li>• have a neurodevelopmental condition (e.g. AD(H)D)</li> <li>• have a neurological condition (e.g. epilepsy, Tourette Syndrome, stammer)</li> <li>• are autistic</li> <li>• have a mental health condition</li> <li>• have a long-term medical condition (e.g. chronic fatigue syndrome, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV)</li> <li>• have a combination of these</li> </ul>

School terms	University terms	Notes
SEND Department Additional Learning Support (ALS) Learning Support Team	Disability Services Disability Team Student Support Student Services Wellbeing/ Welfare Services	The name given to the service or team that supports disabled students varies depending on the university, but most will contain the word 'disability', 'wellbeing' or 'support' in their title. Use a search engine to search for the name of the university plus the word 'disability' or contact Student Services at the university to ask for details.
Special Educational Needs (& Disabilities) Coordinator (SENCo or SENDCo) Learning Support Coordinator	Disability Advisor Disability Coordinator Disability Officer Wellbeing Advisor Inclusion Advisor	The equivalent of a SENDCo at university is usually someone who works in Disability Services or Student Support Services. Their title can vary, but will usually contain the word 'disability', 'wellbeing' or 'inclusion', and 'advisor' or 'adviser', 'coordinator' or 'officer'.
Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) Statement of Needs Pupil Passport	Needs Assessment Report Reasonable Adjustments Plan Support Summary Sheet Individual Learning Plan	The equivalent of an EHCP or Statement at university is called different things at different universities. Most universities will have some method of sharing information about support and adjustments with other colleagues, often with the word 'support', 'reasonable adjustments' or 'plan' in the title. If applying for Disabled Students Allowances (DSA), a Needs Assessment Report forms part of the application process.

The above table is courtesy of the National Association of Disability Practitioners, NADP ([nadp-uk.org](http://nadp-uk.org)), and was provided by Dr Melanie Thorley, STAART Manager and SEND PP Partner, University of Greenwich.

# Glossary

A2B Assessments	Independent Assessment Centre
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ALS	Additional Learning Support
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BASE	Battersea Academy for Skills & Employment
BSc	Bachelor of Science
BUCS	British Universities & Colleges Sport
CAMHS	Children and Adult Mental Health Services
CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
CXK	A charity that delivers career guidance & training programmes to support individuals to build the skills & confidence
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan
FE	Further Education
GP	General Practitioner
HE	Higher Education
ILP	Individual Learning Plan or Inclusive Learning Plan, dependent on institution
KMPF	Kent and Medway Progression Federation
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Others
LSP	Learning Support Plan
NADP	National Association of Disability Practitioners
NHS	National Health Service
PDF	Portable Document Format

PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
QR Code	Quick Response Code
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo/SENDCo	Special Educational Needs (& Disabilities) Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
SEND PP	Special Educational Needs & Disability Progression Partnership
SFE	Student Finance England
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
STAART	Support Through AccessAbility – Retention & Transition
UCA	University for the Creative Arts
UCAS	Universities & Colleges Admissions Service

# Useful national websites

**There is a wealth of information and guidance online. Here are just a few websites you could visit for further information:**

**The UCAS website** – More than just the site you use to apply for university, the UCAS website is your ‘one stop shop’ for all information about applying to university.

**The Government’s website** – this is the central site for all government services (such as benefits) and information. Search ‘Disabled students’ on the homepage to see information specific to those with disabilities e.g. DSA.

**The Snowdon Trust website** – Snowdon Trust is a charity that provides grants to physically disabled and sensory impaired students studying in the UK. Visit their website to find out about grants and scholarships they offer.

**The Disability Rights UK website** – Disability Rights UK is a charity run by and for disabled people. They work to influence regional and national change regarding the various factors affecting disabled people.

**The National Students Union website** – The National Union of Students empowers students to ‘shape the future of education’. The website is a brilliant resource for campaigns, issues regarding education, events, conferences and more, all specific to students.

**The National Careers Service website** – The National Careers Service provide careers information, advice and guidance, and can help you to make decisions on learning, training and work at all stages in your career.

**The Uni Taster Days website** – UniTasterDays.com is an award-winning source of university events for schools and colleges. This free online resource helps students and parents looking to book places on events directly.

# KMPF

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PROGRESSION  
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If you would like this guide in a different format, please contact us via email at [SENDPP@kent.ac.uk](mailto:SENDPP@kent.ac.uk) or call 01227 922 565.