

## Meeting your needs

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### for your study, residential school and assessment support

#### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

We are continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure students and staff can study and work safely.

See [help.open.ac.uk/coronavirus-covid19](https://help.open.ac.uk/coronavirus-covid19) for the latest information on how we are responding to Covid-19 and the differences you can expect to the usual services and support we provide.

We remain open and we're working hard to ensure that the majority of our services are unaffected.

This booklet includes information on financial support which is correct at the time of publishing. The type of support and its availability may be subject to change. For the most up-to-date information you can visit our website at [www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding](https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding).

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The Open University Academic Services

## **Preface**

The Open University (OU) is committed to offering disabled students and anyone who has a health condition, mental health difficulty or a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) access to all our qualifications and modules and the support and facilities they need to take part in every aspect of university life.

The OU Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan sets out our policy and commitment. It is available on our website at

[www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives](http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives). The University is always interested in improving its services to disabled students. If you're unhappy with a particular service – or feel you've had particularly good service – do tell us.

Although we do all we can to provide students with services that meet their requirements so that they can study successfully with us, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to provide all services requested.

While we have done everything possible to make sure the information is accurate, the information may change in the light of altered regulations or policies, or because of financial or other restrictions.

## **Studying outside the UK**

Not all the services described in this publication are available if you're studying outside the UK.

If you register directly with the OU but study outside the UK, you should tell your support team as early as possible if you need support because of a disability so that we can discuss options with you.

If you plan to study through one of our partner organisations, you should liaise with your local education centre (before you register) to discuss the support you feel you'll require and they will then contact us to explore the type of support that can be provided. We'll use the information you give us only to help you in your studies.

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# 1 Introduction

This booklet is for OU students who have a disability or long-term health condition that affects their studies. It describes the services and equipment available and how to apply for them. It is also useful to prospective students who want to find out more about OU study before they register for a qualification and to students who are pregnant or breast feeding as it describes additional support that can be used to meet particular needs, especially at residential school.

To request services and equipment from us, once you have reserved or registered on a module you should complete and return a [Disability Support Form](#) as soon as you can. The Disability Support Form is where you give us information about your likely study needs so we can help you get each module off to a good start. You'll need to provide supporting evidence of your condition in order to access specialist support such as support at a tutorial or residential school, alternative arrangements for an exam and specialist alternative format versions of module material.

NB: If you're registered on a module which has a residential school or exam you will be sent a separate link to the appropriate form at the relevant times so that you can provide specific information about the support you're likely to need. See [Section 5](#) for Support at Residential School and [Section 6](#) for Support for your exam or end-of-module assessment (EMA).

## 1.1 What this booklet covers

The booklet contains the essential information you'll need to help you apply for services to support your study:

- How to tell us about your needs
- An overview of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)
- Support during your module study
- Support at residential school
- Support in exams and assessment
- Particular disabilities and how they may affect study
- Where to get more help.

## 1.2 What you'll find online

Registered students have access to more detailed information than this booklet, with direct links to related resources. The StudentHome [Help Centre](#) is the best place to find information on services that might change quite frequently, such as the following:

- Facilities you can ask for
- Information on supporting evidence
- Equipment available at residential school
- Information about exam papers in alternative formats
- Arranging alternative locations for exams
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) Information on funding schemes.

For students the websites mentioned in this booklet can be accessed from StudentHome [www.open.ac.uk/students](http://www.open.ac.uk/students), where you'll also find online resources and important information about your study. Make sure you log on regularly using your OU computer username and password.

If you're not yet registered as a student, the following link provides information on the additional support available [help.open.ac.uk/topic/disability](http://help.open.ac.uk/topic/disability)

## 2 What you need to do

Be sure to look closely at the modules you need to study to achieve the qualification you want to check the learning requirements and study methods. This booklet describes the typical study activities OU students undertake to help you decide which modules might suit you best.

Once you have registered as a student you can use your OU computer username (OUCU) and password to log in to your personal StudentHome page and find further information online.

Sources of help and advice for disabled students and enquirers can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

## **2.1 What to do before your study starts**

Once you're reserved or registered there are four priorities to deal with before you start your first module. The first three are connected, so you may want to do them together.

### **1. Think about the support you'll need for your module**

Look carefully at the module description details given on your first module(s) at [www.open.ac.uk/courses](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses) to check the study activities described and think about the support you're likely to need to study independently.

Most modules have study materials in additional alternative formats, perhaps books with a spiral comb-binding, or in audio rather than print. You may benefit from the use of assistive technology or communication support. Once you have a good idea of what you're likely to need and checked the module description you can request what you need using the Disability Support Form.

### **2. Submit the Disability Support Form**

Tell us about your likely requirements by completing and submitting the Disability Support Form available online at [help.open.ac.uk/disability-support-form](http://help.open.ac.uk/disability-support-form) or by phoning the Disability Support Team on 01908 541 082. You may already have done this following registration. If you're likely to need any facilities or support to help with your disability, health condition, mental health difficulty or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) please make sure to complete and submit this form as soon as you can. We will be able to record your disability, provide support and guidance, and send you relevant information at the right time. You'll be able to update what you have told us at anytime, by contacting the Disability Support Team.

If you need help in completing the form, contact the Disability Support Team. If you'd like to discuss your requirements, fill in as much of the form as you can and indicate that you need more advice. The Disability Support Team will get in touch with you.

### **3. Send supporting evidence of your condition**

You'll need to provide supporting evidence of your condition in order to access specialist support (such as support at a tutorial or residential school, alternative arrangements for an exam and specialist alternative format versions of module material).

Providing supporting evidence will help us to better understand your needs and develop a support plan for you.

Email your supporting evidence to [disability-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:disability-support@open.ac.uk) or see [help.open.ac.uk/timescales-for-getting-disability-support#sending](https://help.open.ac.uk/timescales-for-getting-disability-support#sending) for other methods of sending us your evidence.

You can send your evidence by post if you can't send it any other way. We do not recommend doing this as it will delay your application.

The Open University  
Disability Support Team  
Frank Henshaw Building  
Hammerwood Gate  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6BY

Suitable supporting evidence can include:

- a medical evidence report completed by a medical professional
- a letter from a medical professional such as a GP, signed, dated and on headed paper
- a letter or report from a medical doctor or qualified practitioner for temporary conditions (alternative and complementary therapists are not accepted)
- a letter from a religious leader for support relating to religious beliefs
- an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- some benefit statements such as a Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- a [full diagnostic assessment report](#) confirming a Specific Learning Difficulty such as Dyslexia.
- a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) Needs Assessment report or entitlement letter
- a copy of a Certificate of Vision Impairment or a letter from an audiologist
- proof of registration as a blind or partially sighted person from the Social Services Office
- a copy of your blue badge

You should still complete and send the Disability Support Form if you do not have your supporting evidence available. The University will still use the information you provide to create a disability profile which can be used to support you in other ways.



#### **4. Check whether you're eligible to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

Go to [Section 3](#) for more information about the DSA funding scheme. It can sometimes take a while to get support in place via the DSA so you need to apply as early as possible. We recommend you complete the Disability Support Form and then apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance as soon as you reserve or register for your module.

Note that the Disability Support Form is **NOT** the same as a DSA application. The Disability Support Form is an Open University form and the means by which you tell us about your disability. A DSA is an external funding scheme to which you will have to make a separate application. Please fill in both forms.

### **2.2 What to do later**

Once these priority tasks are out of the way you're ready to start your study. However, there may be further arrangements to make with us if you're due to attend a residential school (see [Section 5](#)), or for your final assessment or exam (see [Section 6](#)). There is a form to apply for support at residential school, and another to apply for support in your exam or end-of-module assessment. We will contact you about these at the appropriate time.

It can take a while to set up these services, so please start thinking about them once you've settled in to your study routine.

Remember that we do require supporting evidence of your disability or long-term health condition in order to provide specialist services such as changes to exam and assessment arrangements and support at residential schools.

### **2.3 How we use the information you give us**

Once you have returned the Disability Support Form, we'll create a disability profile from the information you provide, which summarises how your disability or specific learning difficulty affects your study. It is confidential and available only to University staff who have a role in making sure your requirements are met, including your tutor.

Your supporting evidence is held securely and only ever seen by university staff who need to make a decision about what extra support you can receive.

If you require more information, please refer to [help.open.ac.uk/telling-the-ou-about-your-disability](https://help.open.ac.uk/telling-the-ou-about-your-disability)

We'll use your profile and supporting evidence to help us provide you with study materials, equipment and services, and to plan our services. You have access to your profile and can ask us to update the information at any time.

As is the case when communicating with all our students, we may record our phone calls with you to make sure we have carried out your instructions correctly, and to help us improve our services through staff training.

The information you provide will be used and managed in line with the [Student Privacy Notice](#).

If you're granted a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funding award (see [Section 3](#)) we'll ask for your permission to record details of it on your profile. If you decide to ask us to make particular arrangements for an exam some of this information could be passed to the exam invigilator.

To ensure we mark everyone's work on merit only, we do not pass information about any student's disability to the staff that mark exam scripts or End of Module Assessments. Information about your condition that you've given the University, or your tutor will not be brought to the attention of the Module Result Panel. The only information they will have will be that submitted via the special circumstances procedure.

We may provide information about your disability, health condition, mental health difficulty, or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) anonymously as part of our statistical returns to the government.

If you have registered as an OU student, we will collect and use more information about you in connection with your study, and we will keep long term academic transcript data. For more information, please refer to [help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/privacy-notice](http://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/privacy-notice)

### **3 Disabled Students' Allowance**

A Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a government grant available to some disabled UK students in higher education. It can help pay for some of the extra study related equipment and services you have to purchase as a result of a disability. This might include specialist technology, non-medical help (e.g. specialist dyslexia tuition) and extra travel costs.

DSA isn't available to all disabled students and you'll need to meet several criteria in order to be eligible for funding from this scheme. Eligibility criteria may differ by UK nation. We encourage all disabled students to check eligibility by referring to the relevant

government website which will also include further details and links to the relevant application form. Further details can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Eligibility for a DSA is not subject to a means test and being in receipt of a DSA does not affect entitlement to state benefits.

Before you apply for DSA you'll need to:

- be studying a minimum of 30 credits per year if you're studying in England, Wales or Northern Ireland - if you're studying in Scotland, the minimum is 60 credits a year
- be studying towards a qualification of at least 60 credits that involves at least one year of study - if you're studying in Scotland, a qualification of at least 120 credits that will take two years of study
- meet the residency criteria as outlined by your relevant funding body
- provide evidence of a disability or specific learning difficulty.

It can sometimes take a while for a DSA award to be made, we therefore encourage students to apply as soon as possible.

DSA isn't intended to cover all of your extra disability-related costs and it's not the only source of assistance. Services, such as module materials in alternative formats and tutorial, residential school and exam facilities are provided by the University to all disabled students who need them.

If you're not eligible for a DSA, have exceeded your DSA allowance or you have timed out of DSA eligibility, you may still receive equivalent support from The Open University. You should discuss your needs with the [Disability Support Team](#).

## **4 Support for your day-to-day study**

This section gives an overview of support available during your study if you have a disability or long-term health condition, to help you think about the services you might need.

These are the skills that OU students use and develop during module study:

- Routine study activities such as reading, making notes, listening to audio material, gathering information from DVDs and the internet
- Using a computer and online resources such as module websites and interactive online activities

- Taking part in tutorials and other group study activities such as online forums
- Carrying out practical work at home
- Completing assignments.

You'll also communicate with your support team and cope with your own administration and study planning.

All students develop and adapt study skills to suit their own needs. You'll find some useful advice online on developing study skills at [help.open.ac.uk/topic/study-skills](https://help.open.ac.uk/topic/study-skills).

You'll probably find some aspects of study more demanding than others. You may want to get further advice from your tutor or your support team.

#### **4.1 Assistive technology**

Many disabled students use specialist equipment to study effectively.

- A physically disabled student who cannot use a keyboard or mouse may be able to use a computer for producing written work with the aid of voice-recognition software.
- A blind student may navigate and control their personal computer using screen reading software that provides feedback to the user as synthetic speech.
- A student who is hard of hearing may benefit from a room loop or personal radio aid which amplifies sound in a tutorial or when working in a group.

There is a wide range of equipment of this kind, which is generally referred to as assistive technology. You may be able to get this equipment on loan from the OU (under the equipment loan scheme) or through a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). You will need to provide supporting evidence.

#### **The Open University Equipment Loan Scheme**

As well as assistive technology being available through the loan scheme, the OU is also able to provide some ergonomic support (such as adapted items of furniture) under this Scheme.

See [Appendix 3](#) for contact information.

## 4.2 Working with your tutor

You'll get contact details for your tutor just before the start date of your module, so this is a good time to get in touch and discuss the support they might be able to offer, for example at tutorials, or the best format for you to submit your assignments.

## 4.3 Routine study activities

Many disabled students find that study takes them longer. You should consider how much time you're likely to need – for example, if you're using an alternative format of your module materials you might have to familiarise yourself with navigating audio files or using bookmarks and changing text size in electronic text versions.

### Reading

Every module has a lot of text, either as printed books or online.

We can often provide printed books with a comb-binding that allows the open book to lie flat (see [Appendix 2](#)), which can be useful if you have problems handling objects, if you have to spend much of your time lying down, or if you use low-vision aids.

*"I've got very bad arthritis. Holding books open is painful for me. The comb-bound units have been a great help."*

Many modules are available as audio recordings for students who can't use print. These recordings can be used on a computer or other players such as a portable DAISY player. Audio could be useful if you're blind or partially sighted, have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, or a physical disability that makes handling books difficult.

### Audio-visual material

Many modules make use of short videos presented on the module website, or other activities on a DVD-Rom. Transcripts of the spoken content are usually provided on the module website.

### Making notes

Making notes is an important part of successful study. As well as recording the main ideas and facts you'll need for assignments or as part of your revision, it allows you to express your understanding in your own words.

You'll make notes:

- at home as you read module materials and in preparation for an assignment
- as part of a tutorial or study group
- at residential school
- when you are revising for an exam.

You can take notes by:

- writing in a notebook or file, or on index cards
- typing on a computer
- dictating into a recorder
- dictating to someone else
- marking text with a highlighter pen
- writing in the margins of the module units
- underlining text
- adding bookmarks within electronic documents.

*“If I take my eyes off the speaker’s face, I really don’t follow what they are saying, so it’s really difficult to take notes. I find I don’t need to take a lot of notes in tutorials and there’s always someone willing to share their notes with me.”*

## Computing

To study with us you’ll need regular and reliable access to the internet and a computer from the start. It’s advisable to check the module description at [www.open.ac.uk/courses](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses) to see the minimum computing requirements. For most modules you’ll be expected to spend at least a couple of sessions a week working on computer-based activities and some of this work may be assessed. Many modules present all the teaching material online.

There are many online services, including access to our library and online forums. Each module has a website to help you plan and organise your study and give access to support from your tutor and fellow students.

If you think you’ll need additional support with using a computer, such as assistive software or hardware, you should discuss this with the Disability Support Team.

## 4.4 Tutorials and day schools

Tutorials are an optional but valuable part of many modules. Tutorial support can include tutorials online or by phone, or face-to-face group meetings. Face-to-face tutorials

usually last about two hours and are held in premises such as a local adult education centre, a university or a further education college.

Some faculties also hold day schools that deal with topics rather than with individual modules. You might then be working with students and tutors you haven't met before, and you might be moving from one group to another. In this way, day schools can be similar to residential schools.

D/deaf or hard of hearing students can request professional communication support via the Disability Support Team.

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You'll need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

### **Access to buildings**

Access to the buildings we use for tutorials and day schools varies considerably, and although we do try to book buildings with suitable facilities, it isn't always possible. If we know what your requirements are, we can tell you if there's likely to be a problem and discuss alternative arrangements, such as changing tutorial locations, tutorial groups or provide alternative access routes where possible. Please give us details of your access requirements when you complete your Disability Support Form.

### **The tutorial environment**

Tutorials are informal occasions where, with the tutor and other students, you can explore aspects of the subject you're studying face-to-face and/or online. This can mean quite a lot of talking, listening, note taking and group activities. The nature of tutorials varies according to the subject matter, but the tutor always spends some time talking to the whole group and answering questions. Ideas or issues are often discussed in small groups, perhaps with a report made to the tutor and the rest of the students. Tutors may use equipment such as whiteboards, presentations using computers, audio or video players and microscopes.

You may have quite straightforward requirements, such as a type of chair, or sitting near the door. [Section 7](#) gives more details of what could be made available. Please let us know when you complete your Disability Support Form so that we can meet your requirements.

## **Alternatives to tutorials**

Modules increasingly make use of technology using forums, instant messaging or audio conferencing. If your module has face-to-face tutorials we do understand that it might not be possible for you to attend. Instead, there will usually be online equivalents on offer. Depending on your circumstances, we may also be able to arrange some individual tutor sessions over the phone, by email or, in exceptional circumstances, by visiting you at home.

## **Study groups**

The University encourages students to set up informal meetings among themselves to discuss topics related to their studies. Study groups meet in all sorts of places – a spare room at the tutorial centre, a pub or a student's home. Groups are often set up at tutorials, so if you can't attend, do ask your tutor for details of your nearest group. We will not give your address or phone number to other students unless you tell your tutor that you're happy about this.

Do let your tutor know if you'd like to keep in touch with other students by phone or online. Even if it's impossible to get to tutorials, or if your module doesn't offer them, there's no need for you to feel isolated.

## **4.5 Home kits**

Home kits are an essential part of some modules, particularly for experiments in science and technology. Some of the home experiment work is assessed in assignments.

If there's no-one you could ask to help, you should discuss this with your support team.

## **4.6 Assignments**

During your module your study progress is assessed by tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and possibly computer-marked assignments (CMAs), which are done in your own home. You can take as much time as you need to complete them, as long as you submit them by the due date.

The final assessment in a module is usually by an exam or an end-of-module assessment (EMA), as described in [Section 6](#).



## **Tutor-marked assignments (TMAs)**

TMAs ask you to produce an essay, a project or an experimental report, or to tackle a structured problem. TMAs in language modules also include some assessment of your ability to hear and speak the language. A TMA that is submitted electronically is called an eTMA. All modules use TMAs as part of their assessment. TMAs are usually typed and submitted electronically online but with agreement from your support team it may be possible to present an assignment as a recorded piece of audio.

If you find that you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, please remember that this can cause difficulties later in the module as extra time to complete your last assignment after the submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances. It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you to sort out the priorities for your study.

If you have a timed TMA you may need to ask for additional time to complete this. If you are doing a timed TMA as practice for an exam question, and you have already agreed your exam arrangements with your support team, you should be able to have the same arrangements as you have agreed for your exam. If you have not yet agreed arrangements for your exam, or have any other queries about your timed TMAs, please contact your support team and your tutor to discuss this.

If you cannot submit your TMA in the way we ask you to for reasons related to your disability (for instance, you are unable to use the eTMA system, or cannot handwrite your assessment) we may be able to arrange for you to submit it in another way. Please ask your support team for advice in good time if you think you might need to submit in a different format.

## **Computer-marked assignments**

Your module may include an interactive computer marked assignment (iCMA) which needs to be completed on a PC.

iCMAs are normally open for several weeks, and you can use any equipment or non-medical help to complete these as you would normally use for your TMAs. iCMAs are also designed to be screen reader accessible, and you can normally complete part of the iCMA, save your answers, and return at a later time to complete it, so you do not need to spend long periods in front of your computer screen. Unlike TMAs you are unable to get an extension to the deadlines on iCMAs.

If you do experience problems completing your iCMA for reasons related to your disability, you should contact your tutor or your support team to ask for help

### **Language modules and speaking assessments**

If you're taking a language module, you may be asked to listen to recordings of the spoken language, participate in online tutorials, or take a speaking assessment. If you'll have difficulties in completing any of these assessments for reasons related to your disability, we may be able to help.

In some cases, we can offer a transcript of audio materials if you have a hearing impairment; you'll need to provide evidence to support your request. If you think you might need this adjustment, you should contact your support team.

If you have a hearing impairment or speak very slowly, we may be able to arrange a one-to-one speaking assessment, with extra time to complete your assessment if you need it. You should tell us about this on the support form for exam arrangements (FRF3).

### **Extensions to cut-off dates**

Each assignment has a date by which it should reach your tutor. Your tutor may allow you to submit certain TMAs late, if agreed beforehand. No extensions can be permitted for iCMAs.

Extensions are not normally permitted for the final TMA, and the Assessment Handbook gives an absolute final cut-off date for final TMAs. If in exceptional circumstances you require additional time for your final TMA for reasons related to your disability, you can apply to extend your deadline by up to three weeks beyond the original submission date. If this extended deadline falls after the absolute cut-off date for your module, you'll need to apply to Policy Exceptions and Academic Conduct Centre in writing. (This information supersedes information provided in other documentation and applies only to students who have declared a disability to the University.)

### **Substitution**

In case you're not able to submit all your assignments, many modules allow 'substitution'. A representative score, based on the assignments that you have submitted, can replace at least one low (or zero) assignment score, perhaps because you didn't submit the assignment. The Assessment Handbook gives full details of how a substitution score is calculated and your module guide will tell you exactly how substitution applies to your module. If you think you won't be able to submit all the

assignments, do talk to your tutor. We may be able to be more flexible about how and when you submit assignments if necessary.

## **5 Support at residential school**

If your module includes a residential school you should try to attend if at all possible, as it will cover aspects of your subject that can't be taught at a distance and it may deliver learning outcomes which are essential for a particular qualification.

Before choosing a module that includes a residential school you should think about these points:

- The type of equipment you might need to take with you or borrow from us.
- Whether you'll need an assistant.
- Whether you'll need any adjustments to the academic teaching, such as regular breaks or specific paper for written materials.

Once you have started to study a module with a residential school it is important to request the facilities and equipment you may need at the school as soon as you can. You do that by completing and returning the Disability Support Form (Residential School), otherwise known as FRF2, as described in [Section 5.6](#). The OU will work with you to organise a suitable support provision but you need to tell us about your requirements at least eight weeks before your school starts. You will also need to provide supporting evidence.

### **5.1 Equipment for use at residential school**

You should bring your own equipment to use during the residential school but it's important to tell us about the items before your school starts.

Alternatively, we may be able to loan you equipment to use while you're at the school – the amount of equipment varies considerably depending on the site, but can include the loan of a scooter, wheelchair, digital voice recorder, bath and shower aids or facilities for storing medication. Borrowed equipment must be returned to the on-site school office before you leave. Students can find more details in the [Residential schools](#).

## 5.2 Working with tutors at residential school

You may benefit from reasonable adjustments with your tutors at a residential school. For example you may want to ask for extra time for an activity; think about where you might like to be located within the teaching room; discuss coping strategies if conditions cause fatigue. This should be discussed with us well in advance of your residential school. You should also make sure that you introduce yourself to your tutors at residential school and take time to discuss and agree a working strategy that will suit you.

## 5.3 Bringing an assistant or medical assistance dog to residential school

Depending on the type of support you need during the school, you may benefit from bringing a personal assistant – a friend or relative who is familiar with your requirements and has a good standard of fitness to support you. Alternatively, we may be able to provide someone from our Disability Support Assistant's Register.

An assistant can help you in various ways, for example by:

- taking notes for you
- helping you at mealtimes with carrying trays
- carrying your books and opening doors
- giving you moral support and guidance
- helping you with reading
- helping you in the laboratory
- helping you to get around, both on campus and on field trips
- helping you to use the equipment you have borrowed from us.

Disability Support Assistants have experience in supporting students with a range of requirements. They cannot help with personal care such as washing, dressing, toileting or administering medication. If you need this sort of support, you should bring your own personal assistant if at all possible. Contact us **at least eight weeks before your school starts** to discuss arrangements.

We use several conditions to match students with assistants, including gender, academic knowledge and experience. Most matches work extremely well, and the key to this is good communication. You should try to discuss your requirements fully with your OU

supplied assistant beforehand, so you get to know and agree your expectations of one another before you arrive at the school.

*“The relationship with my assistant was good. We spoke twice on the telephone before I went to residential school so we both knew something about each other before we met, set some boundaries for our relationship. At the school everything went well. We went to most tutorials and some social events together, but we also had time apart, which I felt was important”.*

If you think you'll probably be able to cope on your own for most of the time but you might need support for occasional short periods, we can provide a part-time 'occasional assistant', for example to help you with your luggage, or just at meal times. You must book this type of support in advance with us.

Don't assume that you'll be able to rely on fellow students for help, as it could interfere with their own study. We have the right not to admit you to a school without an assistant if, in our opinion, you need one. If you arrive alone at your school and an assistant can't be arranged quickly, we may ask you to leave. Equally, we have the right not to allow you to have an assistant if there seems no genuine need.

Even if your only requirement is diet specific or a temporary requirement, please let us know **at least eight weeks before your school starts**.

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You'll need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

## **5.4 Finding out about the school site**

You can find specific details about each school site online. This will help you to decide which to choose (if there's a choice) and which facilities you may need.

Your module description also gives details about the residential school in the 'If you have a disability' section. This is an expert view on what to expect during your residential school, including information on any fieldwork trips, additional activities, or additional equipment that may be required. This information will help you consider what type of support you may need at the school.

Unless we tell you otherwise, your accommodation will be a single room and you may have to share a bathroom with other students. Some of our sites also have shared kitchens, but generally meals are taken at the canteen on site.

## **5.5 If you can't attend**

We accept that for reasons beyond their control, some students may find it impossible to go to residential school and so most modules now include an online school as an option. The online school delivers the same main learning outcomes as the residential school.

If you do not go to the residential school you must do the online school instead. You cannot be excused from this part of the module. Details are shown in the module description.

In modules that are described in our publications as 'residential school modules' (T176 and T276) the residential school is a major part of the module. They do not have an online school, so you shouldn't commit yourself to one of these modules without being sure that you will be able to attend the residential school.

Disability is not in itself a reason to opt for an online school rather than the face-to-face residential school, unless it's impossible to make satisfactory arrangements to meet your needs. We will do all we reasonably can to make it possible for you to go to the school, but we may not be able to do so unless you tell us about your requirements well in advance.

*"I talked to someone in my support team and she suggested that I might be able to manage with an assistant. In fact I needed two – yes, I tried it and I'm really glad I did. It was hard work but my helpers made it possible".*

For some modules the online school is not a free choice option and an application will have to be made to the module team.

## **5.6 Making arrangements for residential school**

### **Step 1 – Book your place at a school**

Several months before the school is held you'll receive booking information and details of available schools by email or through the post, depending on the contact preferences you have set.

Facilities vary between schools and their sites, so your choice of school may well affect the arrangements you'll need to make, such as whether or not you'll need an assistant or the equipment you want to borrow. We can advise you on the best site to choose. If you have restricted mobility in particular, it will help us to help you if you tell us about this before you book your place.

You can book your place online in StudentHome. Places are available on a first come, first served basis so please make sure you book early to try and ensure you get your first choice of site and week.

## **Step 2 – Complete the Disability Support Form (Residential School) FRF2**

This form is available online or as a print version in the StudentHome Help Centre on the [Request support at residential school](#). You use it to tell us about the facilities and equipment you may need during your residential school.

Before completing the form you should think about the type of equipment, facilities or support you may need during your residential school

If you have been to an OU residential school before we'll already have the details, so you may just have to update the form to show any changes in your requirements. Please include details of any dietary or temporary requirements.

Once we have your FRF2 we'll contact you to go through what you might need in more detail.

Remember you will need to provide supporting evidence in order receive adjustments at residential schools.

## **Step 3 – Check whether you can get funds to pay for service**

Some of the services described here can be provided by the University or other fund such as a Disabled Students Allowance. You should speak to the Disability Support Team for advice and support.

## **Step 4 – Check in advance that everything is ready for you**

We can answer any queries you have and confirm that arrangements have been made. Contact us as soon as possible if your circumstances change - for example, if you need more or less support than you originally asked for on your FRF2 form.

Make sure to finalise arrangements with any assistant you plan to take and discuss each other's expectations of the support you'll need.

## **6 Support for your exam or end-of-module assessment**

In addition to the assignments that you submit during your study, your module may include a more formal assessment – an exam or end-of-module assessment (EMA).

### **6.1 End-of-module assessments, projects and portfolios**

Some modules have an EMA, project or portfolio rather than an exam. Depending on the requirements of the module, these may be submitted electronically, typewritten or handwritten in ink. Please contact your support team for advice well before the deadline for your EMA if you have a particular requirement, for example:

- if you cannot produce written work, or can't do so independently
- if you cannot submit your work in the specified format (for example, electronically, typewritten or handwritten in ink) for a reason related to your disability
- if you cannot sign the ET3 forms to confirm that the work is your own.

You can use any of the strategies that you would normally use for your TMAs to complete your EMA, project or portfolio, including any assistive software or non-medical help. When the Module Results Panel meets to award your results, it will have brief factual details of any additional arrangements or reasonable adjustments we have made for your exam. The script marker is not made aware of any disability or additional requirements that you may have reported to the University, nor of any additional arrangements put in place for you. This is so that the Board has a baseline and independent assessment of the academic merit of the script as presented.

### **Exams**

The Open University recognises that some students are disadvantaged by taking exams under standard conditions. We try to compensate as far as possible for any disadvantage you might experience in taking an exam, so that your work may be assessed on the same basis as that of other students.

We have long experience of making reasonable adjustments to suit students' requirements. We also have rules for allowing extra time and for different methods of recording question papers and presenting exam answers. These rules ensure we assess all students on the same basis. However, where the end-of-module assessment is an exam, you must be assessed under invigilated, time-limited conditions with restricted access to module materials.



## **Step 1 - Fill in Disability Support Form (Examinations) FRF3**

If you need any additional support to complete your TMAs, iCMAs, EMA, project or portfolio you should contact your support team as soon as possible.

As it is particularly important that we know about any adjustments you need for exams or language speaking assessments, we ask you to tell us about these on the support form for exam arrangements, FRF3. The form is available (in online and PDF format) for students in the StudentHome Help Centre on the [Exam arrangements for disabled students](#).

Don't worry if you're not able to fill it all in; just fill in what you can and someone from your support team will contact you to discuss your requirements in more detail if necessary.

If you've been awarded a DSA you might want to check the support you have been awarded as you consider what to ask for on this form. You can usually use any DSA funded equipment to complete your continuous assessment, but you should not assume that you'll be able to use all the equipment in your exam.

## **Step 2 - Return Disability Support Form (examinations) FRF3 to us**

Remember, we can make some simple adjustments for your exam in certain circumstances, but we cannot authorise any other adjustments for your exam unless we have documentary evidence from you to support your request (usually in the form of a doctor's letter or certificate, or a diagnostic assessment for specific learning difficulties). If you haven't already provided it to us, please enclose your documentary evidence with your completed FRF3.

Your supporting evidence should state the effects of your disability and how this would make it difficult for you to sit a standard exam. It should also confirm if the effects of your disability are temporary, of uncertain duration, or unlikely to improve.

We are likely to ask to review your supporting evidence periodically to make sure that your adjustments are still meeting your requirements, especially if you're requesting something you didn't need when you started your studies.

Once you've told us about your disability, you'll be sent an email around six months before your exam. It's advisable to make your request and supply all your supporting documentation as soon as possible.

Any requests for exam adjustments are subject to approval and no adjustment is guaranteed.

### **Step 3 (Optional) - Circumstances that may have affected your performance**

If, after your exam or assessment, you think your disabilities or any other circumstances affected your performance, let us know by submitting a [Special Circumstances form](#).

## **6.2 Making reasonable adjustments for an exam**

We may contact you to discuss your requirements.

- We'll try to find an invigilator for you if you can't come to a main exam centre.
- We may need to prepare question papers in alternative formats.
- We may need to ask for additional approval for the adjustments you have requested.
- Providing you have supplied all of the supporting documentation for your exam adjustments, you'll receive confirmation of this before the exam date.

If your circumstances change in a way that affects the services and facilities you require, contact your support team immediately so we can update our records.

### **The question paper**

All students have access to a specimen exam paper during their module. This is in the same style as the actual exam paper and should give you a good idea of what to expect. Your tutor can help if you have questions about the structure of the exam paper for your module.

You might find that a standard question paper would cause you difficulties, either in reading the questions or in recording your answers to them, in which case you may be able to have the paper in a different format. Alternatives include enlarged or coloured papers, Braille or audio format, and Word or PDF versions for use with a computer. More detail about the formats we can offer is available to students is in the [StudentHome Help Centre](#).

### **Your answers**

Most students write their exam answers by hand, in answer books. If that is not possible for you, please think about how you might be able to produce your answers. The

alternatives we can offer include using a computer to produce your answers, asking the invigilator to write for you (as an amanuensis) or recording your answers in audio format. These are described in more detail in the [StudentHome Help Centre](#)

### **Extra time**

Depending on your circumstances, we can allow you extra time to do the exam – either extra working time or rest breaks, or possibly both.

If we agree that you can have extra time to do the exam (either before or after the scheduled time), we'll arrange for the invigilator to be there with you during that extra time.

If you need more than three hours of extra time your exam may be split over more than one day. We'll take into account the structure of the question paper and your individual circumstances.

### **Where to take your exam**

The location of your exam can depend very largely on the requirements you have identified in your FRF3 support form for exam arrangements as well as the types and availability of different exam centres in your area.

You'll also need to know whether your local exam centre has suitable access and facilities for you, such as public transport, suitable parking, wheelchair access or a lift. Staff in your support team will be able to advise you about this.

In most of our main exam centres, the exams take place in quite large halls with students sitting in rows at individual desks. If you need to use a question paper or a method of answering that could disturb other students, or you might need more than thirty minutes extra time, it won't be practical for you to take your exam in a main exam hall.

If we can't meet your requirements in a main exam hall but you're able to travel, it may be possible for you to take your exam either in a side room at your local main exam centre or in another suitable location.

If you can't travel or you need to use equipment that can't be moved easily, you may be allowed to sit your exam in your own home, in a special centre such as a hospital or a day centre, or in another suitable venue, such as a relative's home or your workplace.

## **After an exam or assessment**

When the Module Result Panel meets to award results it will have brief factual details of any reasonable adjustments made for your assessments.

If there were circumstances beyond your control that affected your performance or your preparation, or you think that adjustments made for your exam or assessment weren't suitable for your requirements, you can report the matter to us and the Panel may then take that into account when awarding your result.

You can find more information about reporting special circumstances in the Assessment Handbook, which you can access from your StudentHome at [www.open.ac.uk/students](http://www.open.ac.uk/students), in the Examination Arrangements booklet, or in the Information for Students Submitting Examinable Work booklets (links to the appropriate booklet will be sent to you towards the end of your module). Note there are strict time limits on sending in these forms.

## **7 Support for students with particular impairments and health conditions**

This section collects together advice and information on services that we've found are often relevant to students with a particular impairment or health condition.

### **7.1 If you're blind or partially sighted**

If you're blind or partially sighted you need to consider how you'll be accessing online resources, navigating the virtual learning environment, reading, taking notes and producing written work. Please refer to [Section 4](#) of this booklet to get an idea of day-to-day study and then think about your likely requirements.

We have a booklet 'Studying with little or no sight' which provides detailed study tips for visually impaired students which you can download from [help.open.ac.uk/booklets](http://help.open.ac.uk/booklets).

## **Module materials and equipment**

### **Audio**

The text of many modules is available as audio in DAISY Talking Books (DTBs) which can be played on a mobile device, computer or a portable DAISY player.

The DAISY Talking Book availability can change, so before you commit yourself to a module, please check the latest details for the accessible module materials or contact

your support team before registering to make sure that the recordings you want are available.

If DAISY Talking Books are available you'll find these on your module website in the Resources, Downloads area. You may be able to borrow a DAISY player from the OU or receive one via your DSA award.

As well as DAISY Talking Books the majority of modules will have study materials available in a number of different formats that enable the reader to both modify the appearance of text (size and colour) and output text as speech (with appropriate text-to-speech software/apps).

These formats can all be downloaded from your module website and include ePub, PDF, Kindle (mobi), and Word documents. Read the Studying with little or no sight booklet for more detail on using these accessible digital formats.

We can't guarantee that electronic material will be available for all parts of your module in the format you want, or that it will be fully accessible, although we will do our best to meet your requirements.

### **Braille**

Braille is a useful and flexible format for some people and, as well as producing exam papers and labels in this format, we can also produce Braille versions of key study materials. We need several months' notice to provide this service and so you should discuss this well in advance with your support team. As the majority of module study materials are available in accessible digital formats, equipping yourself with a refreshable braille display is often a better, more flexible way of accessing this format.

### **Large print**

Large print can sometimes be produced by special arrangement, but we do not produce it as standard. Study materials are already available to download from each module website in a number of accessible digital formats, and we hope that students can develop a study strategy using these formats.

If, having tried other formats, you think you will need large print you'll need to discuss this with the Disability Support Team well in advance of your module start date as this service can take several weeks to produce

## **Equipment**

You might want to use low-vision aids, such as magnifying devices, for study at home or at tutorials. However they are tiring to use for long periods so it might be helpful to have audio material as well.

## **Tutorials**

Many modules have online forums and tutorials as well as some face-to-face sessions. You'll have the opportunity to inform us about any concerns you have about participating in tutorials, both online and face-to-face.

If you have face-to-face tutorials, think about travel to the tutorial centre and finding the room. Discuss your requirements with your tutor.

Your tutor should be able to provide you with hand-outs, in advance, in your preferred format, such as electronic or large print. Your tutor should read out text and describe images from the whiteboard.

Recordings of online tutorials are often made available on the module website for listening to after the tutorial has taken place. For face-to-face tutorials you may be able to make an audio recording of what is said, but remember that the content of a lecture remains the property of the University so you should discuss this with your tutor beforehand.

Some students also like to use recorded audio as a means of note-taking, both for ongoing study and revision. There are several kinds of recording devices that can be used, including a digital voice recorder. You may be able to borrow a DAISY player from the OU or receive an alternative as part of your DSA award.

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You may need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

## **Assignments**

Many blind or partially sighted students find that studying takes a lot of time because of the large amount of reading. If you find that you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, this may lead to difficulties later in the year as extra time to complete your last assignment after the final submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might

be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you to sort out ways of prioritising your study.

It is standard practice to present your assignments in electronic form. Exceptionally, with the agreement of your support team, you may be able to present work as a recording on audio file.

## **Residential school**

If you're blind or partially sighted you will need to consider things such as:

- Taking notes
- Working with text
- Producing written work
- Finding your way around the site
- Assistance at mealtimes.

It's important that you find out how much of your module's residential school text can be provided in a suitable form. The printed text of most modules is available either in audio, or in another electronic format. Contact your support team for more information.

We may be able to provide you with an assistant to read and take notes for you, or a digital voice recorder to record seminars and discussions. Other equipment and services may also be available. You can find out more about what can be provided by contacting the Disability Support Team.

## **Exams**

If your module includes an exam you can ask for an audio or a Braille version of your exam paper. However, you do need to specifically request this even if you have received your module materials in audio or Braille.

If necessary, we may be able to provide readers and scribes for exams, as long as you give us enough notice.

When you register for study, you'll have the opportunity to discuss your requirements further with one of our advisors.

## **7.2 If you are D/deaf or hard of hearing**

In this booklet we have used the term D/deaf to mean:

- Deaf people who use a signed or visual language as their preferred language – usually British Sign Language (BSL) or Signed Supported English (SSE); they may have acquired deafness early in life
- deaf or hard of hearing people who use a spoken language as their preferred language and who may have become deaf later in life.

If you're D/deaf or hard of hearing, your needs will mainly be to do with effective communication between you and your tutor and other students, particularly at tutorials, residential schools and exams.

Most of our communication with students is by email.

We have produced the booklet *Studying when you are D/deaf*, which provides detailed information and tips on studying for students who are D/deaf or hard of hearing which can be downloaded from [help.open.ac.uk/booklets](http://help.open.ac.uk/booklets).

### **Module materials and equipment**

Most modules provide transcripts of their audio and video materials in the form of an electronic text on the module website.

### **Tutorials, day school and residential school**

If your module has online tutorials you should discuss the support your tutor can offer so you can take an active part.

At face-to-face tutorials, discuss your requirements both with your tutor and, if possible, with the other students, who are usually very helpful. Ask your tutor to provide notes to you in advance so you know what will be covered. During the session ask the tutor to write as much as possible on the whiteboard and make use of the text facility instead of audio if this helps you take part in discussions. Your tutor may be able to give you electronic versions or photocopies of tutorial notes and slides to save you taking notes.

You may have to encourage your tutor to look at you when speaking, and to summarise verbal contributions from other students. It can be quite difficult for tutors to remember your needs while concentrating on the topic, so don't be afraid to remind them or to ask



for an explanation if you have missed something. It will help all students, not just you, if the tutor writes key words on the board as they come up.

Not all tutorial rooms have built-in induction loops. If you wear a hearing aid that has a T-switch, you may find a radio aid very helpful. They're portable, so you can take them to any event. You need to give the microphone and transmitter to the speaker, so in tutorials this may mean passing the microphone around the group, although most radio aids come with multi-directional conference microphones. Placed on a table or other suitable flat surface in the centre of a seated group, they should pick up what different speakers say without having to be passed around.

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You'll need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

You may be able to borrow a radio aid, or other equipment for your hearing and communication needs from the OU or receive on via your DSA award.

Trained communication support staff for face-to-face tutorials, day schools and residential schools may be available. The support includes sign-language interpreters (BSL or SSE), lip speakers, note takers and, if available, speech-to-text operators. Note takers write a summary of what's being said so you can read it as it happens. They don't make study notes for you. They provide a communication service for people who cannot use other kinds of communication support. Communication services can be organised for all students regardless of funding, subject to supporting evidence and recommendations from Study Needs Assessments. If you have a DSA or other funding award that has approved this kind of support, you're likely to have been directed straight to the communication support providers. If you have not been awarded this support, you can speak to the Disability Support Team about the OU organising this for you.

### **Assignments and exams**

It's in your interest to make sure that your written English is acceptable for assessment purposes. If BSL is your first language and you think that you'll be at a disadvantage in a written exam please contact us so that we can discuss your requirements.

If you find that you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment. However, please remember that this can cause difficulties later in the year as extra time to complete your last assignment after the submission date

will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you sort out the priorities for your study.

Very occasionally, it may be possible to hold exams in BSL. Your support team can also help you to fill in the Special Circumstances form asking the Module Result Panel to take account of this when awarding your module result. If you're concerned about this aspect of your studies, please discuss it with your support team.

### **7.3 If your mobility is restricted**

If your mobility is restricted, your needs relating to study with the OU will relate mainly to access to buildings and rooms.

Most of the places you'll visit for tutorials, residential schools, exams and graduation won't belong to us. Some of the institutions we use for these events are not as accessible as we would like them to be.

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You'll need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

#### **Tutorials and day schools**

If your module has face-to-face rather than online tutorials, you'll be provided with details of your tutorial centre, including information about parking and access to the building and the facilities inside it. Some tutorial centres have parking spaces reserved for disabled students.

If you have a DSA or other funding, you may be eligible for an award to cover the extra cost of travel to and from a tutorial, day school or residential school, if the extra cost is as a result of your disability.

It's sometimes possible to book particular rooms or arrange a more convenient centre for you. Otherwise we may be able to arrange tutorials over the phone, by email or, in exceptional situations, visit you at home.

Please get your tutor to ask the OU about alternative arrangements. It may be possible to arrange for another tutor to help, if necessary.

## Residential school

If your mobility is restricted, your concerns at residential school will probably be to do with access to buildings and rooms around the site. Residential schools that include visits or fieldwork may be able to offer suitable alternatives.

*“I’ve been to two undergraduate residential schools. The first year I had a wheelchair and was supported by an assistant. I was also able to use the campus transport, a ‘people carrier’, for longer distances. The second year I was able to use a scooter, as the site was relatively flat and compact, and I was more independent”.*

Access at residential schools differs from one site to another. You can also find information about the schools from the detailed module descriptions on [www.open.ac.uk/courses](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses). You can discuss your requirements with us; we can help organise support for you.

When choosing a site, make sure you know the answers to the following questions.

- What are the distances between teaching, residential and catering accommodation?
- Are there any slopes that make access difficult?
- Are there obstacles, such as split-level walkways, that are unmanageable in a wheelchair and difficult on foot?
- Do I need to bring a car?
- Do I need an assistant?
- Is there campus transport?
- Is there adapted accommodation suitable for wheelchair users?

We do not own any of the sites we use for residential schools and some are not as accessible as we would like. We do work with host sites to improve facilities, and most students with restricted mobility can go to most of the sites we use.

Most of the sites have some accommodation adapted for wheelchairs, which may include an adapted bedroom with en suite facilities or a separate adapted bathroom. Some sites also have adapted suites with kitchen and dining areas.

All the sites we use have dining areas that are accessible to wheelchair users, although routes may not be as direct as for other students. Staff at the school will make sure, if

possible, that the teaching programme takes place in tutorial rooms, laboratories and lecture theatres that have wheelchair access.

It may be possible to arrange a parking space near the rooms you'll be using to keep your journeys as short as possible.

Electric scooters can usually be arranged, but not all sites are suitable for them. If you would like to borrow an electric scooter during your residential school, please contact us **at least eight weeks before your school starts.**

Think in advance about whether you'll need an assistant at residential school. You may, for example, need someone to push your wheelchair all or part of the time. An assistant can make sure that there's space in rooms for you to manoeuvre or for a mobility aid, and negotiate the queues for you at mealtimes. You could arrange for a friend or relative to accompany you to the school.

### **Assignments and exams**

We can make arrangements for your exam so that you can cope with any physical discomfort. If you're likely to need other arrangements, it's important that you discuss them with us well in advance.

## **7.4 If your manual skills are restricted**

If your manual skills are restricted, your requirements will be mainly to do with written work, handling books and using equipment.

### **Module study and equipment**

Many of our module books have a stiff binding and don't open flat, so you might find it useful to use the comb-bound alternative. The books are bound with a wire comb-like binding that allows them to lie flat when opened. This is particularly useful for people who have manual pain, have the use of only one hand, or who need to scan the material. We can provide comb-binding for most modules that have printed books. If you request comb-bound versions of your module material you will receive these instead of the standard books.

Instead of making separate notes as you study, you might find it easier and quicker to use coloured highlighter pens to mark the important points in the module material or make your own audio notes. If you have difficulty in writing, if you already have a

computer but find using the keyboard difficult, or if you have a lot of pain, you may benefit from special equipment or software to help with written work.

You may find voice recognition software (to write from your dictation) helps. In the long-term, you should work towards producing your assignments in printed or electronic form. However, it may be possible with the agreement of your tutor to submit work as a recording on audio file.

You can discuss the use of equipment and software with the Disability Support Team. They may also be able to suggest other ideas as sometimes quite low-tech items can provide the solution.

## **Tutorials**

In face-to-face tutorials you could ask another student to make photocopies of their notes, or you could take a portable recorder. There are several kinds of recording devices that can be used, including a digital voice recorder. However, the University is making more use of online tutorials which may make participation easier.

If you want to record a tutorial or any part of it, remember that the content of a lecture remains the property of The Open University so you'll have to follow certain procedures. You should discuss this with your tutor before the tutorial.

## **Assignments and exams**

Most modules expect assignments to be typed and submitted electronically. You'll need to consider how you'll produce clearly written essays in a reasonable time, perhaps by using specialist software. We can provide a scribe for exams if you need one, but not for assignments, so you may need to make arrangements for a friend or relative to help.

If you produce work very slowly and can't complete an assignment on time, you can ask your tutor for permission to submit it a few days late. However, remember that this can put you behind for the rest of the module and extra time to complete your last assignment after the final submission date will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). It might be better to get some advice from your tutor to help you prioritise your study.

You should try to use the same method of producing written work for exams as you use for assignments. Where that isn't possible, you should get some practice beforehand. If you need a scribe, we can organise practice sessions before the exams so that you can get used to this way of working.

## **Residential school**

If your manual skills are restricted your requirements at residential school will probably be mainly to do with:

- written work
- handling equipment
- practical work, such as in a laboratory.

You may use a laptop at home for taking notes and writing essays. If you cannot bring this to residential school with you, we may be able to provide you with a digital voice recorder so that you can type or write up your notes later. Contact the [Disability Support Team](#) to discuss your requirements.

Do consider in good time whether you need an assistant to help you at residential school, for example with activities such as laboratory work, practical exercises and field trips as well as getting around the school site and using its facilities. If you decide that you need a personal assistant, tell your support team. It's best if you can arrange for a friend or relative (who is aware of your requirements and who is physically fit) to accompany you while you're at the school.

Try to take any equipment you need to the residential school with you. If this is not possible, we may be able to loan items for you to use at the school.

### **7.5 If you have a specific learning difficulty**

We use the term 'specific learning difficulty' (SpLD) to cover a range of learning difficulties and place the emphasis more on the differences in the way you learn and the strategies you use rather than on difficulties.

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or attention deficit disorder your needs will be to do with processing information – something you have to do a lot as a student.

Some students don't tell us about their specific learning difficulty because of bad experiences they've had with learning in the past. Be assured that we'll try hard to offer you the flexibility and services you need to study effectively.

There are many more suggestions and a lot of advice in our publication 'Studying with dyslexia' which you can download from [help.open.ac.uk/booklets](http://help.open.ac.uk/booklets) or you can request a copy from your student support team.

The service and support we can provide depends on your specific learning difficulty and how it's likely to affect your studies. You'll probably know from your previous learning experiences what works for you.

A diagnostic assessment carried out by an experienced professional (a qualified psychologist or teacher with a practising certificate experienced in working with adults with specific learning difficulties) will provide a report as evidence of your specific learning difficulty and will identify strategies and tools to fit your study needs.

If you apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) you'll need to submit a diagnostic assessment report to your funding body. You should contact your funding body for advice on the current DSA regulations before you arrange a diagnostic assessment.

If you already have an assessment, ask your support team whether it's acceptable or whether you will need a new one.

Diagnostic assessments for specific learning difficulties can't be funded by DSA. Your Student Support Team can tell you how to get an assessment and what alternative funding is available to pay for an assessment.

Support with the cost of a diagnostic assessment is available from the Study-Related Costs Scheme for students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. If you meet the eligibility criteria for study-related costs funding, support will be awarded in line with the income thresholds in the table below:

<b>Gross household income</b>	<b>Award amount</b>
£25,000.00 and under*	100%
£25,000.01 - £29,999.99	90%
£30,000.00 - £34,999.99	80%
£35,000.00 - £39,999.99	70%
£40,000.00 - £44,999.99	60%
£45,000.00 - £49,999.99	50%
£50,000.00 and over	0%

\* or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

There are separate funds for students in Scotland.

## **Module materials and equipment**

Many students with dyslexia have difficulty with the large amounts of text in our modules.

### **Electronic text format**

A considerable number of OU modules are delivered online or have the printed module materials on the module website as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. This electronic text can be manipulated on a computer allowing you to adjust the text size and background colours.

You can also use different forms of software to convert the electronic text into speech.

Unfortunately, not all electronic text is as accessible as we would like it to be. If you're interested in using Adobe PDF files, tick the 'Electronic text' box on the Disability Support Form so that, if for some reason, the module material is not available in PDF format on the module website, we can send you the relevant files.

Note that we can't guarantee that electronic material will be available for all parts of your module in the format you want or that it will be fully accessible, although we will do our best to meet your requirements.

### **Audio**

If you find that it helps to hear the words, you should also think about using audio versions of module material.

The printed texts of many modules are available as audio in DAISY Digital Talking Books (DTBs) format which can be played on your computer.

Many students with dyslexia find it useful to play the recordings as they read the text, or to listen to the recordings first and then read the text. Alternatively it can be helpful to listen to the recordings to clarify parts of the text after reading.

If audio is available you'll find these on your module website. Alternatively contact your student support team to make sure that the recordings you want are available.

Writing, spelling and getting ideas in a logical order can all be helped by using computers and appropriate software. You can discuss this with the [Disability Support Team](#).

### **Tutorials**

Many modules have online forums and tutorials as well as some face to face sessions. You'll have the opportunity to tell us about any concerns you have about participating in tutorials, both online and face to face.



In face-to-face tutorials, you can request that your tutor provides tutorial materials in advance to allow additional time for reading and processing information, or you could take a portable recorder and record your own notes. It's also possible to record what is said at a tutorial or residential school but remember that the content of a lecture remains the property of the University, so you'll have to follow certain procedures. You should discuss this with your tutor before the tutorial.

Try to discuss your learning strategies with your tutor at the beginning of your module so that he or she knows how to help you. For example, arranging an occasional individual tutorial might be useful.

### **Assignments**

If you're getting behind with your work, you can ask your tutor for extra time to complete an assignment.

However, remember that this can cause difficulties later in the year as you could be pushed for time later in your module; and extra time to complete your last assignment will only be given in exceptional circumstances (see [Section 6](#)). Rather than fall behind, it would be better to get some advice from your tutor.

### **Residential school**

You'll be reading new material without the flexibility of taking all the time you need that you have at home. Residential school programmes tend to be very busy to take advantage of the limited time that you're there. So, any preparation that you can do beforehand will be very useful.

Do consider whether you're likely to need extra support at residential school – perhaps by bringing an assistant with you to take notes or arranging to have rest breaks. You'll need to discuss any arrangements with your support team well before you go to your school.

If you usually use recorded module materials, you're likely to find them helpful for residential school too. A digital voice recorder to record notes or parts of tutorials or lectures might be useful. You'll need to be selective about what you record, as you won't have time to listen to everything again. You're unlikely to need to produce written work yourself, as most of the activities are in groups, so if you usually need a computer for written work you'll probably find that it isn't necessary at the school.

If you find colour coding helpful, remember to take coloured highlighter pens and stickers with you.

If you use coloured acetates for studying at home, you'll probably find it useful to bring some to the school.

If you're likely to find it difficult to take notes you could ask another student to allow you to make photocopies of their notes.

Students can find out more about the range of equipment available for loan in the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) and contact us to discuss your requirements.

## **Exams**

You should try to use the same method of producing written work for exams as you use for assignments, but if that isn't possible try to get some practice beforehand.

If you need a scribe, we can organise practice sessions before the exams so you can get used to this way of working. You may be able to have an audio recorded version of the question paper as well as the printed version.

## **7.6 If you have a mental health difficulty**

Good mental health plays an important part in studying for all students and it can be particularly challenging if you're experiencing mental health difficulties as it may not be easy to define or predict how your studies might be affected. You might be taking medication that affects your concentration, or there may be other significant side effects that mean you need to take a flexible approach to studying.

Our tutors have a great deal of experience in supporting adult students and will work with you to provide the academic support you need. You may find the support of a specialist mentor helpful which you can discuss with the Disability Support Team. If you're eligible for a Disabled Students' Allowance or other funding you may be entitled to the support of a specialist mental health mentor.

## **Tutorials**

Many modules have online forums and tutorials as well as some face-to-face sessions. You'll have the opportunity to inform us about any concerns you have about participating in tutorials, both online and face-to-face.

If you have concerns about attending a face-to-face tutorial and working in a group situation, you may want to take a friend or family member with you. Or you may prefer not to go to tutorials at all and receive alternative telephone, email or one-to-one support from your tutor.

## **Assignments**

Your student support team can help you consider what it's like to study with us and the type of adjustments or support you can expect. For example, we can help you to identify and implement effective strategies for managing workload and staying on track. You may need some flexibility with assignment deadlines if your disability makes it difficult for you to produce work on time.

## **Residential school**

Residential schools are intensive and can be particularly demanding both academically and socially, especially if you're not used to being away from home. There may be up to 200 other students involved (70 to 110 for business schools), although you'll be working in much smaller groups of, say, about 10 to 12 people.

Where your module has a residential school, you might feel you need additional support. There may be the option to take a friend or we may be able to arrange an assistant for you. Supporting evidence will be required if the cost of the assistant cannot be paid for by the Disabled Students' Allowance or other funding. It might also be helpful to talk to a friend, relative, doctor or community worker who knows how unfamiliar situations might affect your mental health and help you to get the best out of the support we offer.

You'll need to take some time to think about the strategies you could use and the adjustments you might need at residential school. You'll be in unfamiliar surroundings, with a new timetable and meeting different people. These have an effect on all students. We recommend that you talk it over with your student support team and discuss what might be available to you.

Students and staff at undergraduate schools eat together in a dining area. You'll have a small bedroom to yourself, usually close to a bath/shower room or with en suite facilities and sometimes a small kitchen. Business school sites are usually in hotel or conference-type facilities, offering dining facilities and en suite bathrooms.

Students sometimes find the school more stressful than they expected. If you feel that way, please speak to the Disability Support Coordinator, School Director, School

Administrator, or Residential School Support Manager (RSSM) at the school, who'll be able to offer advice about the options available to you.

## **Exams**

At exam time, you may find sitting in a large exam centre a very daunting prospect, in which case you could ask for an exam at home or in another familiar environment.

These are just a few examples of the kind of adjustments we can make for students with a mental health difficulty. When you register for study, you'll have the opportunity to discuss your requirements further with one of our advisors.

### **7.7 If you have a speech impairment**

If you have a condition that affects your speech, your requirements will be mainly to do with communication with your tutor and with other students, particularly at tutorials and residential schools. At other times you'll be able to communicate either by letter or email if you want to, but your tutor may choose to phone you so we suggest that you make it clear how you would prefer to be contacted.

All OU tutors have email. You'll be able to communicate with your tutor by email or online forums.

## **Tutorials and residential school**

Some modules have face-to-face tutorials but most have them online. You don't have to take part but we recommend that you do as they are an important learning experience. You might like to consider contacting your tutor beforehand to explain what would help you and give an idea of how you manage in other, similar situations.

You'll have developed your own ways to communicate, and it's important to continue to use them. For example, don't worry about speaking slowly. Your speech will probably seem much slower to you than it really is, and it will give other people time to think about what you're saying and about their own responses. Do be confident about asking people to be helpful and not to finish your sentences for you. Most of our students are very considerate.

If you don't feel able to go to face-to-face tutorials, it may be possible for your tutor to send you copies of tutorial materials, or to give you an individual tutorial or extended correspondence tuition. Let us know what's best for you, and we'll try hard to meet your requests.

## **7.8 If you have other disabilities or health conditions**

If you have a condition that is not specifically mentioned in the previous sections, such as angina, asthma, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV, ME or multiple sclerosis, you may not consider yourself to have a disability, but you could have particular needs to do with your studies or at residential school and should let us know so we can discuss what is available.

If fatigue, pain or medication affect your studies, your tutor or your support team can advise you about the best way to cope.

If you're ill and not able to study for a while, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to give up the module. We work out continuous assessment scores in such a way that you don't need to pass every assignment. We'll help you decide on the best course of action. It's sometimes possible to arrange some extra tuition, a tutorial over the phone, or a home visit.

Your tutor should be able to help you to focus on the essential parts or suggest parts of the module you can skim through.

Please let staff and fellow students know what to do if there's any possibility of you experiencing severe asthma or an epileptic seizure and, in particular, whether you'll need medical help. Most people are very supportive, particularly if they know what to do.

Don't forget that you may be eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to help you with the extra costs of study that you incur because of your disability.

### **Tutorials**

Most modules now have online tutorials, but if your module has face-to-face ones and you're unable to attend, it might be possible to arrange individual sessions instead.

### **Residential school**

A residential school may create situations that don't pose any problem at home or at work. For example, you may have:

- religious beliefs that make it difficult for you to attend on certain days
- dietary requirements
- a temporary requirement because of an injury or because you are pregnant.

Let us know about your requirements and we should be able to meet them. We may be able to arrange for you to:

- arrive late or leave early
- have a specially prepared diet
- borrow equipment
- use the campus transport that some sites offer
- arrange for your accommodation to be close to all amenities.

Students can find out more about the support equipment available at residential schools in the following [Residential School](#) page of the StudentHome Help Centre.

If you're going to the residential school you might want to consider whether it would help to take an assistant.

If you need equipment at a residential school it's best to bring your own. Where this is not possible you can borrow equipment from the OU but you'll need to tell us what you need **at least eight weeks before the start of your school**. You can see what equipment is available to borrow by reading the [equipment at residential school](#).

Professionally trained and registered guide dogs and medical assistance dogs can attend face-to-face venues with you in line with each venue's policy. You'll need to provide evidence, such as a certificate or identification card, to demonstrate that your dog is fully trained to the required standard of behaviour.

## Exams

If you think that the three-hour exam will be difficult to cope with, we may be able to arrange for you to take it at home with rest breaks and perhaps extra time.

### 7.9 If you're pregnant or breast feeding

If you're pregnant or breast feeding whilst a student your needs or adjustments are likely to be around attending a residential school, a face-to-face tutorial or sitting an exam.

You are strongly encouraged to attend face-to-face residential schools and we'll try wherever possible to make suitable arrangements. For example providing a private space to feed your baby or facilities to keep baby milk refrigerated and secure as well as arranging suitable breaks during the teaching programme for you to feed your baby.

Additional exam arrangements may be possible if your due date is within four weeks of the exam, you have a pregnancy-related illness, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

You can get more information at:

[help.open.ac.uk/pregnancy-and-parenthood](https://help.open.ac.uk/pregnancy-and-parenthood)

[help.open.ac.uk/exam-arrangements-carers-pregnancy](https://help.open.ac.uk/exam-arrangements-carers-pregnancy)

### **After your exam or assessment**

When the Module Result Panel meets to award results it will have brief factual details of any reasonable adjustments made for your assessments.

If there were circumstances beyond your control that affected your performance or your preparation, or you think that adjustments made for your exam or assessment weren't suitable for your requirements, you can report this to us and the Panel may then take that into account when awarding your result.

You can find more information about reporting special circumstances which you can access from the following:

- [Special Circumstances for Exams and EMAs](#)
- [Exam Arrangements booklet](#)
- [Assessment Handbook](#)
- Information for Students Submitting Examinable Work booklets (links to the appropriate booklet will be sent to you towards the end of your module).

Please note there are different strict time limits on sending in these forms when they relate to TMAs/continuous assessment work and exams/EMAs.

## Appendix 1: Useful publications

Most of these publications are available in an audio version, or can be downloaded in PDF from [help.open.ac.uk/booklets](http://help.open.ac.uk/booklets) or contact our Student Recruitment to ask for a copy.

- Studying with dyslexia: A resource for students, providing tips and advice on studying
- Studying and staying mentally healthy: A booklet offering suggestions and advice for study strategies
- Studying with little or no sight: A guide for blind and partially-sighted students providing tips and advice on studying.
- Studying when you are D/deaf: A guide for deaf and hard-of-hearing students providing tips and advice on studying
- The Good Study Guide by Andy Northedge: Available from the [Open University Students Association](#).



## Appendix 2: Alternative formats of module material

OU modules are delivered in a variety of formats that may already be accessible to you, such as print, online or audio-visual (with transcripts or subtitles), PDF (Portable Document Format), ePub or Word files. You'll be able to access most of these from your module website. Additionally we offer material in other specialist formats. You will need to provide supporting evidence to receive these formats. These include

- Comb-bound
- DAISY digital talking book

When a module is shown as being available in a comb-bound format, it does not necessarily mean that all parts of the module will come with a comb-binding. As a guide, we do not normally put comb-binding on books with fewer than 85 pages unless they are particularly difficult to handle. If you do find a book hard to handle, you can ask for a comb-bound version to be made for you. If you have asked for comb-binding on your materials, you will not be sent a standard version of the books as well – only the comb-bound version.

The transcripts are available from the module website. We'll send you a printed copy if the transcripts are not available in this way or if you have a disability-related reason why you can't use them.

For most modules with printed material, there will be Adobe PDF or other electronic text versions of the main module material on the module website. We'll only provide PDF files for material that is not available in this way. We cannot guarantee that all material will be available or fully accessible, especially if the files have come from external publishers.

If you need any of the materials listed, please ask your support team to confirm what is available before you commit yourself to registering for a module. You should also discuss with them as early as possible if you're likely to need any of your study material in large print or Braille or if you're likely to have difficulty using online study materials, as well as your future study requirements. If you haven't already done so, tell us what you need by using the [online Disability Support Form](#). It can take up to six weeks for you to receive any alternative formats or specialist equipment you request.

We create additional alternative format module materials. Your DAISY material may not arrive until after the standard module mailing, which is dispatched from the warehouse.

With the exception of comb-bound material, even if you have requested an alternative format, you will still receive the standard mailing.

## **Appendix 3: Contact details**

**Students:** Contact the Disability Support Team.

### **Disability Support Team**

Are the first point of contact for students with a disability and / or additional need to help them navigate their learning journey through the University to ensure their needs are met. Also provides Disabled Students Allowance advice.

#### **England**

Phone: +44 (0)1908 541 082

Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5pm

Email: [disability-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:disability-support@open.ac.uk)

Website: [help.open.ac.uk/topic/disability](http://help.open.ac.uk/topic/disability)

#### **Ireland**

Phone: +44(0)2890 323 718

Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5pm

Email: [ireland-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:ireland-support@open.ac.uk)

Website: [www.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland)

#### **Scotland**

Phone: +44 (0)131 226 3851

Monday to Friday 8:30am - 5pm

Email: [scotland@open.ac.uk](mailto:scotland@open.ac.uk)

Website: [www.open.ac.uk/scotland/](http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/)

#### **Wales**

Phone: +44 (0)29 2047 1170

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

Email: [wales-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:wales-support@open.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/wales/>

**Enquirers:** for all initial contact about modules, the range of support available and how to get that support contact Student Recruitment.

## **Student Recruitment**

Talk to Student Recruitment when you're thinking about OU study and wish to register. Staff ensure that students and enquirers have the information and advice they need to make the right study choices for them.

Phone: +44 (0)300 303 5303

Monday to Friday 08:00 to 20:00, Saturday 09:00 to 17:00 UK time

Email from our website at [www.open.ac.uk/contact](http://www.open.ac.uk/contact)

## **For Welsh Speakers**

I Siaradwyr Cymraeg

Os ydych yn siarad Cymraeg a hoffech drafod eich anghenion astudio drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, cysylltwch â:

Y Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru

18 Heol y Tollty

Caerdydd

CF10 1AP

Ffoniwch ni ar 029 2047 1170

Ebost [wales-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:wales-support@open.ac.uk)

## **Student Fees**

Student Fees handle applications for funding grants for modules fees and study costs, and the administration of Tuition Fee Loans for students in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Phone: +44 (0)1908 653 411

Email: [studentfees@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentfees@open.ac.uk)

## **Student Fees Scotland**

Phone: +44 (0)131 226 3851

Email: [scotland@open.ac.uk](mailto:scotland@open.ac.uk)

## **Open University Students' Association**

As an Association they represent the collective needs of the student body.

Phone: +44 (0)1908 652 026

Email: [ousa@open.ac.uk](mailto:ousa@open.ac.uk)

Website: <https://www.oustudents.com/>

## **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

### **For students in England**

Student Finance England

Phone: 0300 100 0607

Email: [dsa\\_team@slc.co.uk](mailto:dsa_team@slc.co.uk) (dsa\_team@slc.co.uk)

Website: [www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england](http://www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england)

### **For students in Wales**

Student Finance Wales

Phone: 0300 200 4050

Email: [sfw\\_dsa\\_team@slc.co.uk](mailto:sfw_dsa_team@slc.co.uk) (sfw\_dsa\_team@slc.co.uk)

Website: [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)

### **For students in Northern Ireland**

Student Finance NI

Phone: 02825 661 385

Email: [DSA-PT-PG@eani.org.uk](mailto:DSA-PT-PG@eani.org.uk)

Website: [www.studentfinancenir.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk)

DSA in Northern Ireland is administered by Student Finance NI.

### **For students in Scotland**

Email: [scotland@open.ac.uk](mailto:scotland@open.ac.uk) (put your PI number in the subject box)

Phone: 0131 226 3851 (Monday to Friday 9:00 to 17:00 UK time)

Website: [www.open.ac.uk/scotland](http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland)

DSA awards in Scotland are dealt with by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS); their website provides information and guidance about DSAs and tells you how to apply.

Website: [www.saas.gov.uk/forms\\_and\\_guides/dsa.htm](http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm)

Contact details: [www.saas.gov.uk/contact-us](http://www.saas.gov.uk/contact-us)