

Equality Service



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Information for students with Asperger Syndrome

equality ■ access ■ inclusion

This leaflet is about the study support services that students with an autism spectrum condition, such as Asperger Syndrome, can access through the Disability Team, which is part of the University's Equality Service.

What is Asperger Syndrome?

Asperger Syndrome is an autism spectrum condition which is not uncommon. Research shows that around 1 person in 300 has a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome.

Asperger Syndrome belongs to a group of conditions that can vary from very mild, where the person can function as well as anyone else around them, to so significant that people find it difficult to take part in society. No two people are affected by Asperger Syndrome in exactly the same way, although people with the condition tend to experience some level of difficulty with social interaction and communication, and may develop repetitive behaviour and resistance to change.

Students with Asperger Syndrome at the University of Leeds study a wide range of subjects – from maths and sciences to languages and arts subjects.

What support is available to me?

Students with Asperger Syndrome have a wide range of support requirements, and staff at the Disability Team will be able to work with you to establish the support that you require.

Students at the University of Leeds who have Asperger Syndrome can access a variety of support services, subject to availability and suitability, without applying for any additional funding. These include:

- modified examination arrangements, such as extra time or rest breaks
- extended library loan facilities, so that you can keep library books for longer
- access to campus-based computers with assistive technology (including text-to-speech, mind-mapping and magnification software)
- the loan of small items of equipment, such as recording devices
- assistance in requesting copies of handouts or lecture presentations in advance from your department
- term-time drop-in sessions to talk to member of staff in the Disability Team, from Monday to Friday, 12:30pm – 1:30pm

- advice and guidance to both you and your department about the impact of your condition on various study tasks, and how to accommodate this

To access a range of other support services, you will need to apply for additional funding. Depending on your requirements, these services include:

- a full assessment of your academic support needs
- weekly study strategy support sessions with an independent specialist in Asperger Syndrome
- computer equipment or assistive software for you to own
- allowance for photocopying, printing, computing and recording consumables
- personal assistant, note-taker or mentoring support
- the opportunity to attend relevant workshops
- allowance for travel costs if you are living away from campus and are unable to travel by public transport

Many students with Asperger Syndrome benefit from having a Specialist Mentor to meet up with on a weekly basis. A Specialist Mentor can help you to stay on track with academic work, organise your studies and help you settle in to University life. Specialist mentoring is an individualised service which can be largely tailored to your needs.

What do I need to do to get support?

Firstly, you will need to register with the Disability Team. You should make an appointment to come and speak to the Disability Co-ordinator with responsibility for supporting students with Asperger Syndrome.

You will need to provide the Disability Team with evidence of your Asperger Syndrome diagnosis. If you are unsure of what to provide, a Disability Co-ordinator can advise you about this.

Where can I get funding to pay for the support I need?

Funding is usually available from Student Finance England (or equivalent funding body), the NHS (if you're studying on a healthcare course), or from whatever body is providing you with funding for your studies.

In most cases, you will be able to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA), which are available to most disabled students from the UK. This funding is intended to assist with disability-related costs resulting from your course of study. It is not a loan, nor is it means tested. We strongly recommend that you start applying for DSA early because the process can take several months. We can advise you about sources of funding or help you fill in the application forms.

Most international students and students on very short courses (for example, single modules) will not be eligible for DSA. In these circumstances, we advise you to contact the Disability Team as soon as possible to discuss the support and funding you may need whilst studying at Leeds.

Some students may also be eligible for other sources of funding, such as the University's Access to Learning Fund or external organisations, such as the Snowdon Award Scheme. We can provide you with further advice on whether you are eligible and how to apply.

If I am eligible for DSA, what do I do next?

You will need to fill in an application form and submit evidence of your specific learning difficulty to your funding body. If your initial application is accepted, you will receive a letter asking you to undertake an assessment of study needs.

You can have your assessment here at the University of Leeds Assessment Centre, which is part of the Equality Service, or, if you prefer, at another Assessment Centre. There are often advantages to getting your assessment carried out at our Assessment Centre, since our Assessors are familiar with the University and what is available here.

This assessment will help to identify any additional support that you will benefit from, such as one-to-one support or assistive computer software and equipment. Following your assessment, a report will be produced, which will be sent to your funding body. They will contact you, in writing, to tell you exactly what support they will pay for through DSA.

Your academic department here at Leeds will also receive a copy of this report as it will contain recommendations for the department to put in place. For example, the report might advise the department that you require copies of handouts in advance of teaching sessions.

Are there other things I should do?

We advise students with Asperger Syndrome to:

- inform your department about your diagnosis, if you feel comfortable doing so, especially if you may need adjustments from your department
- familiarise yourself with the university computer systems and find out what type of information and resources are available through the 'Student Portal'
- familiarise yourself with the library systems and buildings
- try to get reading lists and lecture handouts before teaching sessions
- prepare before lectures, wherever possible
- start academic work well in advance – it may take you longer to complete written work than other people on your course
- speak to your department or the Disability Team as soon as possible if you encounter any difficulties

Whilst the Disability Team and your department will work to support you throughout your time at Leeds, you will need to participate fully in the support that is offered to you to make it work. In particular, if you feel that your support requirements change at any time, then it is important that you let us know.

What other support is available to me on campus?

Other local sources of information and support for students with Asperger Syndrome are available, including:

■ Accommodation Services

– www.leeds.ac.uk/accommodation

If you have specific accommodation requirements due to your Asperger Syndrome, you can discuss this directly with Accommodation Services. For students who are experiencing difficulties in their University of Leeds accommodation, the hall wardens are available for help and advice. Students can also talk to their wardens if they are worried about a fellow student in their accommodation.

■ The Library

– www.leeds.ac.uk/library/using/disab

The University Library aims to make its resources and services accessible to disabled students. A selection of library guides in alternative formats is available (for more information, visit www.leeds.ac.uk/library/documents or email librarydisabilitysupport@leeds.ac.uk). For information about the general services provided by the Library, or to arrange a tour of the Library for a group or individuals, you can also email the same address.

■ Skills@Library

– www.skills.library.leeds.ac.uk

Skills@Library offers expertise, support and resources to help students develop the academic skills required to be successful at university. You can book onto one of our workshops – which cover topics such as ‘How to find and manage academic information’ and ‘Communication and presentation skills’ – or access our online resources to enable you to work through tutorials at a time and pace that suit you. The Skills@Library service also includes maths support for students struggling with the transition to university maths. Skills@Library has rooms which students can book for group-working activities or preparing a presentation. For more information, visit the Skills@Library website.

■ Student Counselling Centre

– www.leeds.ac.uk/studentcounselling

The Student Counselling Centre provides a confidential brief counselling service (individual and group) with professionally qualified staff who are very experienced at enabling students to deal with a wide range of issues. Appointments need to be booked but drop-in sessions are available every day during term-time without an appointment.

■ FLASH (Focussed Learning and Self Help) clinics

– www.leeds.ac.uk/studentcounselling

These are run by graduate mental health workers from the Primary Care Trust and are held weekly on Wednesday afternoons, at the Student Counselling Centre. The clinics aim to provide students with the tools to deal with common mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and depression. There is a drop-in between 2-3 and bookable 1-1 sessions are also available. Students can either self-refer, or be referred by their GP or counsellor.

■ Leeds Student Medical Practice

– www.leeds.ac.uk/lsm (or a student's own GP if they are registered elsewhere).

Students are advised to register with a local GP, such as the Leeds Student Medical Practice. Staff at the practice are experienced at dealing with students and have knowledge of the university systems and procedures.

■ Student Advice Centre

– www.luuonline.com/help

Part of the University of Leeds students' union, the Student Advice Centre offers independent, confidential and free information, advice and representation from professional advisors covering money, housing, immigration, and academic and other university procedures.

■ Leeds University Union (LUU)

– www.luuonline.com

The students' union has set up a Disabled Students' Assembly and there is also a Disabled Students' Society. For more information about these groups, contact Leeds University Union.

■ Nightline

– www.leedsnightline.co.uk

This is a confidential listening and advice service, available to all students in Leeds. The service is run for students by trained student volunteers.

There are other local services and organisations in the region for people who have Asperger Syndrome. These include a regional branch of the National Autistic Society (www.nas.org.uk).

How can I contact the Disability Team?

You do not have to wait until you arrive in Leeds before you contact us. In fact it is helpful if you contact us as soon as possible to enable us to arrange your support.

Telephone: **0113 343 3927**

Fax: 0113 343 3944

Email: **disability@leeds.ac.uk**

Website: **www.equality.leeds.ac.uk**

Post: Disability Team
Equality Service
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

Visit: We are based on the ground floor of the Social Sciences Building.

If you require a copy of this leaflet in an alternative format (e.g. braille, large print, or audio), please email **disability@leeds.ac.uk** or telephone **0113 343 3927**



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