

Contacts before enrolment

If you have a disability and need support with preparing for university before enrolling, the best people to contact are:

Disability Support/ Disability & Neurodiversity Team

Every UK university has a dedicated Disability Service. They can:

- Offer guidance on available support (like Disabled Students' Allowance, access arrangements, or mentoring)
- Help you understand what adjustments are available (e.g. accommodation, study support, exam arrangements)
- Assist with any paperwork or assessments that need to be completed in advance

You can usually find their contact details on the university's website under 'Student Support', 'Disability Services', or 'Wellbeing'.

UCAS

If you're still applying, or have questions about how your disability might impact the admissions process, UCAS advisors can help:

UCAS contact for disabled students:

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/students-with-individual-needs/disabled-students>

Your funding body (e.g., Student Finance England)

If you're applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) early, you can:

- Apply as soon as you've accepted a university offer (even if not yet enrolled)
- Contact Student Finance England for help with the DSA application

The university's Admissions or Wellbeing Office

If you can't find a direct disability contact, email or call the admissions or student wellbeing teams, and they'll refer you.



Enrolment

Now that you've secured your place at university — congratulations! The next step is making sure you're set up for success, both academically and personally. This includes registering with the right support services, planning your needs, and making the most of what your university offers. Here's how to get started:

Understand your rights

Under the Equality Act 2010, all universities in the UK are legally required to provide reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or neurodiverse needs. This means you have the right to:

- Request adjustments (e.g. extra time in exams, accessible housing, or recording lectures)
- Receive learning support
- Access counselling or mental health services
- Be treated fairly and with respect

You don't need to disclose your condition to everyone, but telling the right people early can open doors to the support you deserve.

Who should you speak to?

Once your place is confirmed, try to connect with the following people or departments, before the term begins:

Disability Services / Student Support

Your first stop! These teams can help organise accommodations, apply for DSA, liaise with your lecturers, and support you through any changes. You can usually contact them before the term even begins.

Head of Course / Academic Tutors

Once you're assigned a tutor, it's worth setting up a quick chat or sending an email explaining your NF (NF1, NF2 or SWN) and how it might impact your studies. You don't need to share everything — just enough so they understand what support you may need.

Residential / Accommodation Services

If you require specific housing needs (e.g. ground floor, quiet space, proximity to medical care), make sure you've informed this team early — ideally before you move in, but after you've accepted your place!

Student Health & Wellbeing Team

This includes mental health services, counselling, and on-campus medical support. They may also help with stress, fatigue management, or signposting services during term time.

What Should You Share?

Your diagnosis – Explain your condition in your own words, and highlight any related needs (e.g. fatigue, sensory issues, chronic pain, ADHD, or anxiety).

Reasonable adjustments – This could include:

- Extra time or rest breaks in exams
- Lecture materials in accessible formats
- The ability to record lectures
- Timetable flexibility
- Priority housing or parking

Emergency plans – If you may need help evacuating a building or require medical access during flare-ups, this should be shared in advance.

Note: These details are kept confidential. Staff can't share your information without your permission.

Managing personal needs

University life can be a big adjustment, but your well-being matters just as much as your academic success. Some helpful strategies include:

- **Create a daily routine** - Use a planner or app like Google Calendar to balance classes, meals, rest, study time, and breaks.
- **Use quiet spaces** - Whether it's your room, the library, or a calm café, find somewhere to decompress when needed.
- **Set boundaries** - Don't feel pressured to say yes to every event. It's okay to prioritise your energy and self-care.
- **Explore support services** - Most universities offer free or low-cost gym sessions, mindfulness workshops, and counselling.



Tips for when lectures begin

Once your timetable kicks in, here's how to stay supported:

- **Let tutors know early** - A quick email or chat explaining your NF and any reasonable adjustments you've been approved for can make all the difference.
- **Use a formal support letter** - Your disability team can provide a summary of your agreed support (sometimes called a "Learning Support Plan") to give to lecturers if you're unsure how to start the conversation.
- **Ask questions** - Don't be afraid to ask about lecture materials, extensions, or classroom adjustments. Most tutors want to help.
- **Follow up if needed** - If something isn't working, say so. You have every right to ask for a review of your arrangements.

Communication tips

- Be polite and confident — your needs are valid.
- Keep emails short and clear.
- Use real-life examples when explaining what helps you succeed (e.g. "I may need an extension if I have a seizure or hospital visit").
- Stay positive — most staff will appreciate your honesty and clarity.

Freshers' Week

Freshers' Week — often called Welcome Week — takes place during the first week of your university journey. It's a mix of social, academic, and admin-focused events designed to help you settle in, meet new people, and get to know your surroundings.

Starting university can feel overwhelming, especially if you're adjusting to new routines or managing a condition like NF. But Freshers' Week is a brilliant opportunity to explore your new environment, communicate your needs early on, and begin building your support network — even if you're living at home.

Social events

- **Welcome parties** - Icebreakers, themed nights, and student socials are designed to help you relax and meet other first-years — everyone's in the same boat!
- **Society fairs** - A great way to explore student clubs and interest groups. Joining a society is a fantastic way to meet like-minded people.
- **City tours** - If you're moving to a new place, guided tours can help you feel more confident navigating your new town or city.

Academic introductions

- **Induction sessions** – Meet your module tutors, academic advisors, and disability support staff. This is a great time to share any specific needs and learn what help is available before classes begin.
- **Introduction lectures** – These cover course structure, grading systems, and the resources you'll have access to throughout your studies.
- **Campus tours** – Get familiar with the buildings, lecture halls, and accessible routes around campus.
- **Library tours** – Learn how to borrow books, use digital resources, and get help with coursework or exam prep.

Administrative essentials

- **Enrolment & registration** – Complete your paperwork and collect your student ID. It's best to do this early in case there are any delays or corrections needed.
- **Accommodation support** – Get settled in student housing, and contact your university's disability services or welfare officer, if you need help with adjustments.
- **Health services information** – Find out how to register with the university's GP and what health support is available on campus.

Practical tips

- **Talk to key departments** – Don't be shy about speaking to your disability support team, course tutors, or the students' union. They're here to make your experience as smooth and inclusive as possible.
- **Attend workshops** – Look out for sessions on budgeting, mental health, time management, and more. These are great for building confidence and independence.
- **Be yourself** – Many students feel nervous about meeting new people. You don't have to share everything about your condition straight away — but being yourself will help you find the people who make you feel most at home.



Final advice

Enrolment is about setting yourself up to thrive — not just academically, but emotionally and socially too. By being prepared, speaking up, and accessing the right services, you give yourself the best chance to enjoy everything the university has to offer.

You deserve to feel supported and empowered. And if something doesn't feel right, speak up — there are people ready to listen and help.



Important contact details

Every university should have a dedicated section on its website — usually titled something like "Support for students with a disability" — where you'll find a wealth of information about the services available to you.

If you're ever unsure where to start, your Head of Course or Personal Tutor should be able to direct you to the right people and help make introductions or referrals where needed.

Key contacts to look out for

- Disability Coordinators
- Wellbeing Advisors / Welfare Officers
- Mental Health Advisors
- Students' Union Welfare Team
- University Student Support Groups
- Buddy or Peer Mentoring Schemes
- Chaplaincy and Multi-Faith Centres
- Library Services (for accessibility, study help, and quiet spaces)
- Academic Staff (Head of Course, Personal Tutor, Lecturers)

These teams exist to support your journey — whether it's arranging accommodations, finding quiet spaces, or offering emotional support during tough weeks.

Build your confidence & community

Taking ownership of your condition and getting involved in university life can be a huge confidence booster. It's also a great way to meet new people, find support, and build experiences that enhance your CV, for life after uni. Here are a few ways to make your mark:

- **Join the Disability Council** – A chance to represent your peers and help shape accessibility across campus.
- **Get active in student groups & initiatives** – Many student councils welcome input from disabled students to help improve inclusivity.
- **Explore student societies** – There's a society for almost everything — from baking to politics to film. If one doesn't exist for your passion, you can even start your own!
- **Find on-campus jobs** – Whether in the SU café, the library or helping out at events, student jobs are flexible and can fit around your health needs.
- **Volunteer** – It's a brilliant way to meet people, learn new skills, and give back to the community — all while gaining experience.

Pro tip: Save important phone numbers and email addresses in your phone or planner early on — it's much easier than hunting them down when you're stressed or need urgent support.



How to make a complaint or raise an issue about disability

If you are ever unsupported, you have the right to speak up. Raising a concern can feel daunting, especially if the situation is emotionally difficult, but it's important. You deserve to feel safe, supported, and treated fairly. Every university is required to have clear procedures for resolving complaints, and they are there to protect you.

Know your university's process

Each university has its own process for addressing disability-related complaints or accessibility issues. These are usually outlined on the university's website, or you can ask Disability Services or the Student Complaints Office for help.

You are encouraged to raise your concern as early as possible — the sooner something is addressed, the sooner it can be resolved.

Making a complaint

Here's a general outline of how complaints are usually handled:

Contact Disability Services first

This is your first point of contact. They may be able to:

- Help resolve the issue informally. This route is often faster and less stressful, and many issues can be resolved this way.
- Act as a mediator between you and other departments
- Support you with paperwork or advocacy if your condition makes it difficult to handle alone

Document everything

Write down what happened, when, and who was involved. Keep:

- Emails or messages
- Notes from meetings or conversations
- Medical letters or needs assessments (if relevant)
- Having a clear timeline and evidence will help if the issue needs to be escalated.

Make a formal complaint (if needed)

If informal attempts don't work, you can submit a formal complaint. This usually involves:

- Writing a clear summary of what happened
- Explaining how it affected you and your studies
- Stating what resolution you are seeking

Your university's Student Complaints Office or Equal Opportunities Team will guide you through this process.

Following up

After submitting a formal complaint:

- Keep a record of your communications
- Don't hesitate to follow up if there are delays
- You have the right to ask for updates and outcomes in writing
- If you feel the complaint wasn't handled fairly, you have the option to escalate it.

External support options

If your issue remains unresolved or is particularly serious, there are national bodies that can help:

- **Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)** – for current or former students in England and Wales www.oiahe.org.uk
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** – enforces disability discrimination laws in the UK www.equalityhumanrights.com
- **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)** – for unresolved public service complaints www.ombudsman.org.uk
- **Disability Justice Project** – provides legal aid and support for disabled people in education www.disabilityjustice.org.uk

Not sure where to start?

If you're unsure what to do, you can always speak to:

- Your Disability Advisor
- Your Head of Course or Personal Tutor
- The Students' Union Welfare Team

They can talk you through your rights, university policies, and next steps — and support you every step of the way.

