

Navigating terminology barriers and accessing support at university

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Introduction

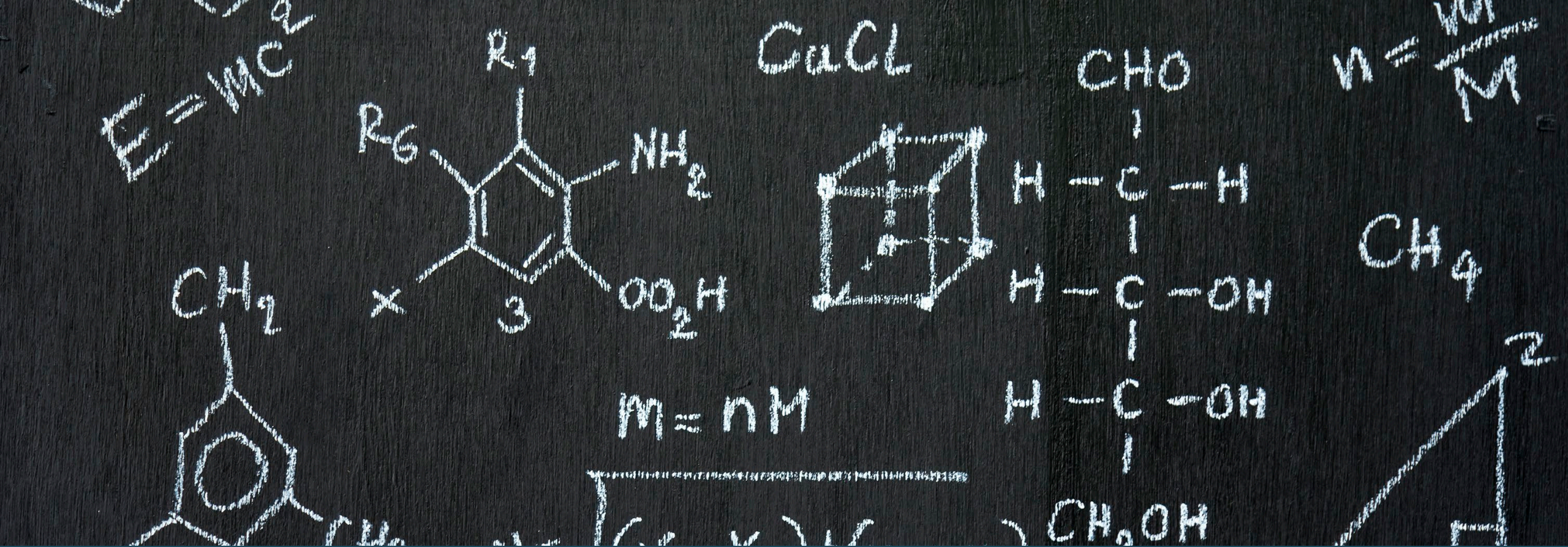


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- My name is Harriet Cannon (she/her)
- I manage the Disability Advisory Team at the University of Leeds
- I'm a Director of the National Association of Disability Practitioners
- I've been working with disabled students in HE for 25 years

- **Terminology as a barrier to access**
 - Definitions
 - Key terminology: school vs university
- **Disability support at University**
 - Sharing information
 - Accessing support: school vs university
 - A new environment
 - Support at university overview
 - Funding for support



Terminology as a barrier



What's in a name? SEND vs Disability

School term	University term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)• Special Needs• Special Educational Needs (SEN)• Additional Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disability

Understanding and accepting the use of disability/disabled is a big – but very important – step for many school leavers.



What do we mean by 'disability'?

Broad **legal** definition (Equality Act 2010)

- Any physical, mental or sensory impairment which has a significant impact on daily life, and which is long term (i.e. lasts more than 12 months).
- For a student, daily activities includes: taking notes, writing, researching, reading text, moving between multiple locations.





Universities support students who...

- are D/deaf or hearing impaired
- are blind or visually impaired
- are physically disabled, and/or have mobility difficulties
- have a specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)
- have a neurodevelopmental condition (e.g. ADHD)
- have a neurological condition (e.g. epilepsy, MS, stammer)
- are autistic
- have a diagnosed mental health condition
- have a long-term medical condition (e.g. CFS/ME, epilepsy, MS)
- **have a combination of these**



Which team provides support?

School term	University term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND Department• Additional Learning Support (ALS)• Learning Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disability Services• Disability Team• Student Support• Student Services• Wellbeing/Welfare Services• AccessAbility or Accessibility Team

Don't spend time looking for the University's SEND Department – it doesn't exist!



Which person provides support?

School term	University term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Educational Needs (& Disabilities) Coordinator (SENCo or SENDCo)• Learning Support Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disability Advisor/Adviser• Disability Coordinator• Disability Officer• Wellbeing Advisor/Adviser• Inclusion Advisor/Adviser• Access Officer/Adviser

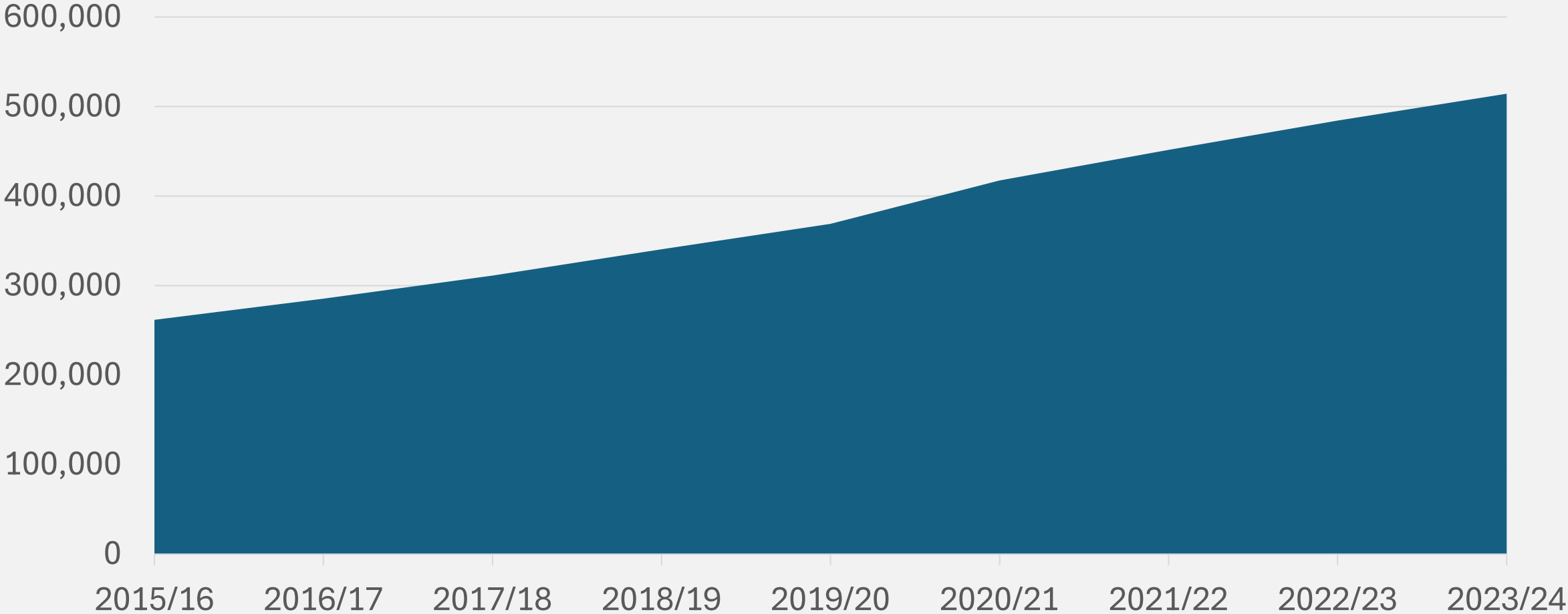
Don't spend time looking for the University's SENCo or SENDCo – they don't exist!



Disability support at University



Known disability by year





Sharing information

- **No magical transfer of information!**
- Students **must** tell **each** University about:
 - Their disability
 - Their support requirements and exam adjustments
- **Nothing** will happen without action by the student.
- Opportunity to share information at application and annual registration. It's never too late!
- Universities cannot provide social or personal care
- Family members generally not involved



Accessing support: school vs uni

- Formal diagnosis not always required
- Led by parents / teachers
- Costs met by school or Local Authority
- Support led by SENDCo
- Exam arrangements agreed via Form 8 process
- EHCP for some students

- Formal diagnosis *may* be required
- Led by student only (18+)
- Costs met by Student Finance and university
- Support led by team
- Exam arrangements agreed locally
- Most students assessed

A new environment



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- Universities are **much** bigger than schools
- Activities may be split across **multiple sites**
- Greater focus on **independent learning skills**
- Teaching staff will **vary frequently**
- More **anonymity** at university = more **responsibility**
- New environment may mean **new support requirements**
- Not all universities can/will provide the same support



University support and adjustments

- Exam arrangements
- Teaching and learning adjustments
- Built environment adjustments
- Orientation support
- Note taking support
- Personal Assistant support
- Accessible resources
- Assistive software site licences
- Accommodation



Funded support



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- Study Needs Assessment
- Specialist 1-1 support (e.g. Mentor, Study Skills Tutor)
- BSL interpretation
- Specialist equipment
- Specialist software
- Disability-related travel costs
- Consumables (e.g. printing)



Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)

- Government grant for additional study-related costs
- Not a loan, not means-tested, nothing to pay back.
- Pays for:
 - Specialist equipment and software
 - One-to-one support from specialist support worker(s)
 - Travel allowance
 - Other costs (e.g. printing materials)
- Most UK undergraduates studying approved course for 1+ year are eligible, but **evidence of disability required.**



Evidencing disability

For Disabled Students' Allowances:

Disability	Evidence required
Disability or long-term health condition	A copy of a report or letter from your doctor or consultant
Mental health condition	A copy of a report or letter from your doctor or consultant
Specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia	A copy of a 'diagnostic assessment' from a practitioner psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher

For Universities:

It varies, but the bar is usually lower - send us what you have!

Note: evidence of working diagnoses *should* be accepted for both

Applying for DSA



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15+ WEEKS

1

- Complete application form
- Supply appropriate evidence

2

- Eligibility assessed and confirmed
- Invitation to Study Needs Assessment

3

- Undertake Study Needs Assessment
- Await confirmation

4

- Receive final approval
- Contacted by equipment and support providers

Applications open in March or April each year



Alternative funding sources



- University responsibilities – many will match DSA
- University Financial Assistance Funds
- Charities (e.g. Snowdon Trust)
- Daily living support – talk to Local Authority



How can parents/supporters help?

- Learn more about disability support and funding!
- Talk with students about disability and support at university
- Explain what disability means + reassure
- Help put together a list of questions for prospective universities
- Assist with contacting Disability Services when applying
- Collate diagnostic or other supporting information
- Support Disabled Students' Allowance application from March



Messages for students

- It's ok to ask for help.
- Disability is not a dirty word.
- You are not alone!
- Access to support and adjustments is a legal right.
- Start the process early for the best outcome.
- You don't need to know what you need – we can help you work it out.





Summary

- Terminology creates an unnecessary barrier
- Understanding the terminology facilitates access
- University disability support is different to school support
- The university environment is different to school
- There is more funding and more support available to university students than at school
- Students must drive the necessary processes
- Students must apply for DSA as soon as possible (March)
- Universities are not telepathic! Students need to talk to us.



Resources

- [NADP School vs University: a glossary and explainer](#)
- [Disabled Students' Allowances](#) (eligibility and application)
- [Disability Rights UK](#) (student section)
- [Disabled Students University Guide](#)
- [Disabled At Uni help sheets](#)