



Universiteit Utrecht

STUDYING AT UTRECHT UNIVERSITY WITH A DISABILITY



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1. Introduction

Although studying with a disability can be more difficult, more time-consuming and tiring than without, it need not prevent you from obtaining a university degree. Utrecht University is committed to making it easier for students with a disability to study and has developed a variety of different schemes and provisions. Your degree programme's study advisor can provide you with the exact details of the options available to you in terms of special modifications, financial and other support during your studies.

Do you have a disability? Do you also need additional provisions in order to study effectively? This brochure explains the provisions offered at Utrecht University for students with a disability, as well as providing details on qualification criteria and who to contact. There is also a step-by-step plan and a list of useful addresses.

2. Who is eligible?

Sometimes it is difficult to tell others about your disability. However, it is definitely worth overcoming your anxiety and contacting the study advisor for your degree programme, as disabled students are entitled to additional provisions which can improve their ability to study.

The word 'disability' refers to any permanent physical, sensory or psychological disorder that can delay one's studies¹.

Examples include: - a visual, auditory or motor impairment

- dyslexia;
- a chronic physical or psychological disorder, such as depression, bipolar disorder, an autistic spectrum disorder, ADD or ADHD, Crohn's disease, diabetes, asthma, rheumatism, or ME/CFS.

The university has developed special provisions for students with dyslexia, chronic fatigue, ADD or ADHD, autism, psychological disorders, and motor, visual or auditory impairments (see Section 3.1). If you suffer from a disability other than those mentioned above, contact your study advisor to discuss your options.

Schedule an appointment with the study advisor for your degree programme to discuss your eligibility for the extra provisions. Try to do so as quickly as possible - preferably well before you start your degree programme - to ensure that there is enough time to make the necessary preparations. That way you will be able to take advantage of the extra provisions from the start.

¹ You must be able to provide evidence of your disability in the form of a written certificate from a medical professional such as a GP, specialist or other doctor, the therapist who treats you, a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

3. Provisions

A disability need not prevent you from studying and earning a university degree. Utrecht University offers disabled students various provisions to support them during their studies.

3.1 Educational provisions contract

One of the key services offered for disabled students is the 'educational provisions contract', which enables students with a so-called 'recognised disability' to conclude a contract with the degree programme faculty regarding his/her entitlement to education provisions. These provisions relate to practical aspects of studying, including:

- receiving extra time for examinations, papers and assignments;
- modified assignments or examinations (i.e. larger print, A3 format, use of a laptop, etc.);
- audiovisual and other aids which improve the student's ability to follow a lecture.

Following an intake interview with the study advisor, a decision will be taken regarding which provisions are both feasible and most appropriate in your situation. The resulting agreements are laid down in a contract. Every effort has been made to standardise the available provisions throughout the university, so the provisions offered should be approximately the same everywhere, including outside your own faculty.

The university has developed special facilities for students with dyslexia, chronic fatigue, ADD or ADHD, autism, psychological disorders, and motor, visual or auditory impairments. Below you will find more information about the provisions offered. If you suffer from a disability other than those mentioned, contact your study advisor to discuss your options.

3.1.1 Students with dyslexia

Anyone who has dyslexia will have long-term problems with reading and/or spelling. Students with dyslexia can provide evidence of their disorder by obtaining a dyslexia certificate from a health care psychologist or special education expert. The certificate must demonstrate that the individual's disorder meets the requirements of the *Stichting Dyslexie Nederland* dyslexia foundation (www.stichtingdyslexienederland.nl).

Which provisions are offered?

Provisions for dyslexic students include the following:

- more time for tests and examinations;
- additional time to complete papers, projects and assignments;
- assignments and examinations with a clearer layout (sufficient contrast, larger font, A3 format, etc.);
- option to sit examinations in a separate room.

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. To qualify for these provisions, you must be in possession of a dyslexia certificate. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- A hard copy of a point-by-point lecture summary (hand-out)
- A copy of the sheets and notes used
- Permission to use audio equipment to record the lecture
- Permission to use a laptop during lectures and in working groups
- At the start of the lecture, a broad overview of what will be covered
- You can ask the lecturer to write new names or terms on the board or on paper
- You can ask the lecturer to clarify what parts of the learning material are most important and what study activities are required for the course.

3.1.2 Students with chronic fatigue

Chronic fatigue can occur either separately (ME/CFS), or as a result of certain other chronic disorders such as diabetes, asthma or rheumatism. People with chronic fatigue can suffer from mental and physical exhaustion for longer periods of time. A GP or specialist can determine whether fatigue is caused by a chronic disorder.

Which provisions are offered?

Provisions for students with chronic fatigue symptoms include:

- additional time to complete papers, projects and assignments;
- less stringent attendance requirements;
- a separate room for sitting examinations to eliminate distractions (if the student also has difficulty concentrating).

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Which provisions are granted will also depend on the medical certificate issued by your doctor. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- Reading tips / specification of the core materials
- Extra clarification
- Extra breaks during writing and other activities.

3.1.3 Students with ADD and ADHD

ADD and ADHD are disorders characterised by difficulty paying attention, impulsiveness and hyperactivity, though not all sufferers experience all of these symptoms. ADD and ADHD are classified into various sub-forms. The diagnosis can be made by a health care psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

Which provisions are offered?

Provisions for students with ADD and ADHD include:

- more time for assignments and examinations (so that the student can concentrate for shorter periods);
- a separate room for sitting examinations (with a small group of other students) to eliminate distractions.

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Which provisions are granted will also depend on the medical certificate issued by your doctor. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2). It is also possible to pay a personal coach to help you organise your day-to-day activities and household (www.studentcoach.nl).

What can you request from lecturers?

- Lectures always structured in a clear and similar manner
- Scheduling support
- The option to work in small groups
- The option to work with the same partner on group assignments
- The option to sit examinations in a separate room
- The option to discuss any difficulties with assignments.

3.1.4 Students with autism

Autism can take various forms (Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)), including Asperger's syndrome and PDD-NOS. Autism sufferers have difficulty processing stimuli and interpreting and/or anticipating linguistic and social signals. Their ability to prioritise may also be impaired and they may feel stressed in new and unfamiliar situations. The diagnosis is made by a health care psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

Which provisions are offered?

Utrecht University offers counselling and advice to students with an ASC, including:

- a tutor providing practical guidance and information;
- a study advisor who provides advice about the study programme and general educational matters;

- the opportunity to participate in weekly meetings of the Altrecht mental health care agency's study support group and Utrecht University's student psychologists;
- the opportunity to participate in the special programme for students with an ASC during the Utrecht Introduction Time (UIT).

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Which provisions are granted will also depend on the medical certificate issued by your doctor. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2). It is also possible to pay a personal coach to help you organise your day-to-day activities and household (www.studentcoach.nl).

What can you request from lecturers?

- Extra clarification
- Adherence to the schedule
- Structured notes and an indication of the key points
- A clear description of assignments and expectations
- Clarification of the form, content and assessment of examinations
- Clear and logical formulation of examination questions.

3.1.5 Students with a psychological disorder

There are a great many different psychological disorders, each with its own set of symptoms and effects. Depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders and eating disorders are a few examples. Psychological disorders can cause symptoms of depression, social problems, fatigue, difficulty with cooperating, planning and organising and serious forms of stress or anxiety.

Psychological disorders are diagnosed by a health care psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

Which provisions are offered?

The needs of students with psychological disorders vary. During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Which provisions are granted will also depend on the medical certificate issued by your doctor. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- Lectures always structured in a clear and similar manner
- Programme content and module descriptions
- Structured notes and learning materials
- Reading tips.

3.1.6 Students with a motor impairment

Rheumatism, muscular dystrophy, paraplegia, spasticity and RSI/CANS are examples of motor impairments. These disorders restrict movement, including the ability to sit down, walk and change positions and can impair balance, arm and hand functions as well as the ability to sit up.

Which provisions are offered?

Utrecht University offers the following provisions for students with a motor impairment:

- extra time for assignments and examinations;
- modified schedules (clustered courses, only in accessible rooms);
- less stringent attendance requirements.

Almost all of Utrecht University's faculties are based on the Uithof campus, where most of the buildings are wheelchair-accessible. Some of the teaching buildings used by faculties in the city centre are only partly accessible. If a particular provision is required, you can talk to the study advisor about possible solutions.

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- Extra breaks during writing and other activities
- The provision of hand-outs (possibly enlarged or in digital form) before lectures
- The option to ask questions by telephone or e-mail
- Consideration for the fact that accessing the lecture hall is difficult for you
- A good seat in the lecture hall.

3.1.7 Students with a visual impairment

Students with a visual impairment are either partly or completely blind because of any of a number of causes, such as glaucoma or retinitis pigmentosa.

Which provisions are offered?

Utrecht University offers the following provisions for students with a visual impairment:

- timely information about the choice of study materials;
- the provision of study materials in digital form wherever possible;
- the option to use a laptop during lectures and examinations;
- extra time for assignments and examinations;
- modified schedules (clustered courses, only in accessible rooms).

At the Utrecht University Library on the Uithof campus you can access all of the available digital facilities using a laptop. At the Legal Library there is a workstation especially designed for visually impaired students, complete with a large monitor, refreshable Braille display and speech synthesiser. There is also a special computer with Braille facilities in the computer room of the Willem C. van Unnik Building (first floor, room 101).

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- A larger font for examinations and assignments or use of the A3 format
- Advance provision of presentations and assignments in digital format

- Permission to use audio equipment to record the lecture
- Personal instruction for practicals and tests.

3.1.6 Students with an auditory impairment

Students who suffer from an auditory impairment are either partly or completely deaf, due either to a congenital defect or later illness. Other complaints such as tinnitus and auditory hypersensitivity are also considered auditory impairments.

Which provisions are offered?

Utrecht University offers the following provisions for students with an auditory impairment:

- an alternative test to replace oral presentations;
- permission to use special recording equipment in lectures and working groups;
- modified schedules (in rooms equipped with a hearing loop and/or which are accessible for an interpreter).

The following lecture halls on the Uithof campus are equipped with hearing loops:

- Groen (in the Unnik Building);
- Rood, Wit and Blauw (Ruppert Building);
- Theatron and Megaron (Educatorium).

You can borrow a receiver at the audiovisual counter by the Educatorium reception desk. A mobile installation (also available at the Educatorium reception desk) can be used in the remaining teaching rooms in these three buildings. The rooms in the Academie Building are also equipped with hearing loops. Please contact Student Services in advance if you want to use these facilities.

During the intake interview with your study advisor you will discuss which provisions are feasible and best suit your needs. Financial provisions are also offered (see § 3.2).

What can you request from lecturers?

- The use of microphones (when using hearing loops/solo equipment)
- Slower speech and clear articulation
- You can ask the lecturer to always remain visible to the students, so it is possible to read body language and non-verbal communication
- Distribution of notes and hand-outs
- Advance provision of digital information
- Permission to use audio equipment to record the lecture
- Sufficient space to accommodate an interpreter.

3.2 Financial provisions

There are special provisions to provide additional support to disabled students during their studies. The most important provisions are described here. You may be considered eligible for a disability provision if you:

- have incurred a delay in your study progress during your grant entitlement period, as a result of your disability;

- are unable to earn your diploma within the specified ten-year period, as a result of your disability;
- are declared unfit for work, with an incapacity of more than 80%, during the specified ten-year period for earning a diploma, pursuant to the Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong);
- are forced to discontinue your studies, as a result of your disability.

Please note: The rules, as described here, are based on the current Student Finance Act (Wet studiefinanciering). The proposed amendments to the Act, intended for implementation by 1 September 2015, have not yet been included.

3.2.1 Financial assistance for graduation

Are you a full-time student and you have incurred a delay in your study progress during your grant entitlement period, as a result of your disability or chronic illness? It is possible to apply to DUO for financial assistance in the form of an additional 12 months' student grant (see Section 3.2.1). At Utrecht University, there is a compulsory sequence of steps to be followed for applying for financial assistance:

1. First, extending the duration of the DUO student grant is considered;
2. Second, financial assistance for graduation provided by the university is considered.

Additional year of grant assistance

Depending on their degree programme, students are entitled to a basic grant amount (performance-linked grant) for either four, five or six years plus a three-year loan. Does your disability mean that you are unable to complete your studies within the period for which you are entitled to the performance-linked student grant? Once you have satisfied the performance-linked grant requirements, the extra year of grant money will be converted into a gift.

Step-by-step plan

1. Schedule an appointment with a Student Counsellor from Student Services to discuss whether you qualify for the student grant for an additional year. If so, you will receive the necessary forms from the Student Counsellor. The Student Counsellor will also explain the further procedure to be followed.
2. Normally, the additional year will begin after after the period in which you received the performance-linked grant. However, if you prefer, you can request postponement of the supplementary grant.

Financial assistance for graduation

An additional year of grant assistance, which has been awarded by DUO, will be adjusted for the delay incurred in your study progress. This means that, if you have received a twelve-month extension of the grant entitlement period, you will only receive the financial assistance for graduation provided by the University from the thirteenth and subsequent months of delay.

Only if DUO rejects your request will it be possible for you to submit a request for financial assistance for graduation with retroactive effect, based on your disability.

Conditions for financial assistance for graduation

You shall qualify for financial assistance for graduation only if the following conditions are met:

- The delay in academic progress is caused by circumstances beyond your control;
- You have consulted a Student Advisor, Student Counsellor or Student Psychologist on time (i.e. within five months of the occurrence of the circumstances beyond your control) about minimising the delay or temporarily discontinuing your studies and the student grant, if the delay in your study progress exceeds five months
- The delay in your study progress has been incurred during the grant entitlement period;
- You have not yet graduated from the degree programme for which you are requesting financial assistance for graduation;
- You have, at some point of time, received a grant for the degree programme for which you are requesting assistance;
- During the period when the circumstances applied which caused the delay, you were enrolled as a full-time student at Utrecht University and have also paid the applicable tuition fees.

Financial assistance for graduation – duration, amount and payment

The duration of financial assistance for graduation will be the number of months that your studies were delayed during the grant period. The moment when a particular programme component can be completed during a new academic year will not play any role in determining the duration of financial assistance for graduation.

The amount of financial assistance provided is equal to the grant amount received by you in the last month of the academic year in which the circumstances (that caused the delay) occurred. For most students, the last month of the academic year is August. If you have discontinued your studies and the student grant earlier than this, the amount of financial assistance is equal to the last grant amount received by you in that academic year.

Once the decision has been communicated to you, the financial assistance amount is paid out in monthly instalments. The financial assistance will ensue from the beginning of the month after that in which your application is received. You may also request that the payment be started at a later date.

Application procedure for financial assistance for graduation

You may apply for financial assistance for graduation at the end of the academic year, via the 'Financial Assistance for Graduation Application Form' ([link](#)). You should submit this application at the latest by 31 December of the academic year following that in which you have incurred the delay in your study progress.

After 31 December, your application will no longer be considered, unless you can demonstrate that you were unable to apply due to circumstances beyond your control. In that case, you should send a letter to Student Services explaining your situation.

3.2.2 Unable to earn a diploma on time

If you are unable to earn your higher education diploma within ten years as a direct consequence of your disability or chronic illness ('special circumstances of a lasting nature'), there are two provisions based on which you may submit a request to DUO:

- a five-year extension of the specified period for earning a diploma;
- conversion of the performance-linked grant into a gift.

If the specified period for obtaining a diploma is extended, you will have more time to comply with the requirements of the performance-linked grant (i.e. obtaining a diploma within the specified time limit). For you, this period would then be fifteen years, instead of the usual ten years.

A request for conversion of the performance-linked grant is only possible if it is clear that you are no longer capable of ever obtaining a higher education diploma, as a result of your disability or chronic illness.

Schedule an appointment

Schedule an appointment with a Student Counsellor, via Student Services, to discuss your eligibility for one of the above provisions. If the Student Counsellor considers you eligible for an extension or conversion, you will receive the necessary forms from him/her. The Student Counsellor will also explain the further procedure to be followed.

3.2.3 Occupational disability

During the specified period for earning a diploma, have you been unfit for work due to an occupational disability to such an extent that you are unable to earn more than 20 percent of the reference income through your work, and such that you are eligible for a benefit under the Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong)?

You may request DUO to immediately convert your entire performance-linked grant into a gift. The same applies to any monthly performance-linked grant instalments that you have not yet received.

It is not necessary for the Student Counsellor to intervene with regard to this request, although it is advisable to make an appointment with a Student Counsellor before submitting the request. As of 1 January 2010, the rules under the Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong) have changed and decisions based on the 'old' Act are different than those based on the 'new' Act. Hence, you should consult the Student Counsellor about whether you can actually be considered eligible for this provision. You may also consult the Student Counsellor about when to submit the application.

Schedule an appointment

Schedule an appointment with a Student Counsellor at Student Services. Take the first decision from the agency paying the benefit (UWV) along with you when you meet the Student Counsellor. Together with you, the Student Counsellor will consider whether you qualify for this provision and discuss the further procedure to be followed.

3.2.4 Forced to discontinue your studies

Are you forced to discontinue your studies because:

- You have become disabled since you started your studies?
- An existing disability has worsened?
- You have become chronically ill since you started your studies?

If so, it is possible to apply for a student grant for a new, other degree programme. In this way, you can start afresh with a degree programme that is compatible with your disability, with a full student grant.

The performance-linked grant amount you have already been allocated will be converted into a gift, regardless of your study results. Your previous student financial assistance record will be declared completely null and void. A new diploma term of ten years will apply starting from the first month in which you receive the performance-linked grant for your new degree programme. In order to have the grant converted into a gift, you are required to earn your diploma within ten years from the start of the first month in which you receive the performance-linked grant for the new degree programme.

Schedule an appointment

Schedule an appointment with a Student Counsellor at Student Services.

It is best to submit your application once you are sure you will have to deenrol from your current programme for one of the above reasons and you have chosen another programme that is more suitable.

3.3 Accessibility of buildings and car parks

Normally, the Utrecht University campus and buildings are easy to access. Consult the digital map (www.uu.nl/maps) for information about the provisions offered at each location for disabled students. The special parking spaces for the disabled are also shown on the map.

3.4 StageWijzer

The StageWijzer, a brochure with practical tips about doing a work placement, was created specially for disabled students. You can download the StageWijzer at www.uu.nl/stage.

4. Who can answer your questions?

Do you have a disability? Do you need advice or additional provisions in order to study effectively? Continue reading below to find out where you can request information.

Study advisor

Would you like more information about university provisions for disabled students? If so, contact the study advisor for your degree programme (see Chapter 6) through the Student Information Desk of your faculty. He/she will be able to explain the options for modifications, supervision or financial support during your studies. It is critical that you contact your study advisor as quickly as possible and preferably well before you begin studying. If necessary, the study advisor will refer you to other support staff, such as the student counsellor or the student psychologist.

Student counsellor and student psychologist (Student Services)

Disabled students who require information about financial issues or experience difficulties can turn to the student counsellors for guidance and advice. They can also assist you if you want to take advantage of any university financial assistance schemes or if you feel you should de-enrol because of your disability.

Student psychologists can help you solve problems with your studies and address personal problems.

To schedule an appointment with a student counsellor or psychologist, contact Student Services (see Chapter 6). Student Services can also help you if you want to lodge a complaint, objection or appeal.

Odesk

The online information desk Odesk (www.uu.nl/qdesk) provides answers to frequently asked questions about studying at Utrecht University with a disability.

5. Step-by-step plan

Take action yourself

If you want to apply for extra educational provisions, contact your study advisor as soon as possible. It is best to do so well before you begin studying to allow enough time to make the necessary arrangements. It is important that you yourself take the first step. You should first decide what provisions you will need, then inquire about the options and take the necessary action. The website 'Handicap en Studie' provides a wide variety of information which can help you weigh the options (www.handicap-studie.nl).

Documentation

Sometimes a disability or chronic illness is not immediately apparent to the outside world. In that case, you must be able to provide evidence of your disability or chronic illness in the form of a written certificate issued by a professional such as a GP, specialist or other medical doctor, the

therapist who treats you, a psychologist or a psychiatrist. Students with dyslexia can provide evidence of their disorder by obtaining a dyslexia certificate from a health care psychologist or special education expert. The certificate must demonstrate that the individual's disorder meets the requirements of the *Stichting Dyslexie Nederland* dyslexia foundation (www.stichtingdyslexienederland.nl).

Be sure you have the medical certificate with you when you meet with the study advisor or student counsellor and that you are always in possession of your own copy of the certificate.

Step-by-step plan for arranging educational provisions

1. Ensure you are in possession of the proper documentation.
2. Decide which provisions you require.
3. Schedule an appointment for an intake interview with the study advisor.
4. The study advisor will check the disability certificate, determine the necessary provisions and, if required, refer you to other support staff.
5. The educational provisions contract is drawn up and signed.
6. Provisions are offered.

6. Further information

Student Services contact details

Student services desk

Visiting address: Bestuurs Building, Heidelberglaan 6
3584 CS Utrecht (the Uithof campus)

Hours Mon to Fri: 11.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Telephone (Mon to Fri, 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m. and 1.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m.)

030 - 253 7000

Internet

www.uu.nl/studentervices

6.1 Useful websites

- Dutch Equal Treatment Commission: www.cgb.nl
- Handicap + Studie expertise centre: www.onderwijsenhandicap.nl
- Jopla, platform for disabled youth: www.jopla.nl
- Personal coaching: www.studenticoach.nl
- Personal budget: www.pgb.nl or www.minvws.nl/dossiers/persoonsgebonden_budget_pgb
- DUO - IB-Groep student financial assistance: www.DUO.nl
- Study abroad with no limit: www.studyabroadwithoutlimits.eu
- Benefits under the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (AWBZ): www.minvws.nl/dossiers/awbz
- UWV benefits for aids and provisions (brochure): www.uwv.nl/particulieren/brochures/brochures/IR11000279.aspx
- Wajong benefit for disabled youth: www.uwv.nl/wajong or www.wajongwegwijzer.nl
- Benefit under the Work and Income (Capacity for Work) Act (WIA): www.uwv.nl/wia
- Social Support Act (WMO): www.minvws.nl/dossiers/wmo