Our 2020/21 student fees and COVID-19

Are fees being reduced this term to reflect the fact that most learning will be online because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The College has no plans to reduce student fees as a result of having to move most learning online because neither the quality of education and support that we are providing, nor our costs, have significantly changed.

We are continuing to provide a unique Birkbeck learning experience, with live seminars delivered by world leading academics, alongside pre-prepared learning materials and a comprehensive range of student support services. Students are also continuing to study for highly regarded University of London qualifications.

You can read more about fees in the Fees Policy.

What costs have been incurred because of COVID-19?

We have invested in developing a high-quality, virtual, learning environment to deliver most teaching and learning this term in order to allow continuing students to progress and complete their courses, and new ones to begin their studies.

To recreate Birkbeck’s unique learning experience online, over the summer, our academic staff transformed their modules so that they could be studied online, complemented by live weekly teaching events and they converted learning resources into formats for remote delivery.

The College has invested in an additional 180,000 e-books, including many core textbooks, which we are providing free-of-charge to students.

We also invested money on making our buildings COVID-19 safe for private study and to access the library, as well as the teaching and learning activities that have to take place in person.

Our financial support offering was increased to promote access at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
Our academics are continuing to deliver live seminars alongside pre-prepared learning materials, and we are continuing to provide high quality student support services, virtually.

How do Birkbeck’s costs compare with those at other universities?

Our offer of part-time, evening study from a research intensive college of the University of London really is unique and so, comparisons may be hard to establish.

We firmly believe that the virtual learning environment that we have created is of high quality and that it supports students to balance their studies with work or caring responsibilities if they choose to do so.

We decided in the early summer to put student and staff safety first by moving online and so, focused our time and resources on reconfiguring and redesigning our courses, seminars, teaching materials and support services to ensure that they work online and we could recreate the unique Birkbeck learning experience virtually.

Unlike higher education institutions whose main focus is on online provision, our courses are delivered by leading academics, who are active researchers, and we are continuing to deliver a high number of live interactive sessions, rather than rely largely on pre-prepared materials. Our students are also continuing to study for University of London qualifications which are recognised throughout the world.

When will the College return to in-person teaching?

To maintain the safety of students and staff, we are currently providing in-person teaching only when it is necessary to do so, such as for laboratory practicals and mandatory field trips.

We aim to return to in-person teaching as soon as it is safe to do so but we have also provided a guarantee to students who want to continue to study with us remotely, that they will be able to do so for the whole of the academic year if they would like to.

How do I raise concerns about the quality of my course?

We understand that some students occasionally feel that elements of their studies fall short of their expectations.

We welcome feedback about our courses and services and there are a number of ways in which this can be provided including via our regular surveys and through student
2020/21 representatives such as the Birkbeck Students Union who have a network of School Representatives you can discuss issues with. Most issues can be resolved quickly through informal resolution and if this doesn’t work you can submit a formal complaint.

**Can I defer or pause my studies because of COVID-19?**

Yes. There are established mechanisms to allow students to defer of take a break from their studies if they would like to do so. There is also lots of different types of support available to help students to continue with their studies if they want to and are finding it difficult to do so. If you are considering taking a break from your studies or would like to talk to someone about getting support to continue, in the first instance, you should talk to your programme director, supervisor or personal tutor.

**Why wasn’t I told that most teaching and learning would be online during the first term?**

Birkbeck was one of the first institutions to make clear that, apart from a small number of programmes, the 2020-21 academic year would take place online, providing the reassurance for students that they could complete the year without in-person attendance.

Birkbeck, University of London

November 2020