

Information for Needs Assessors

Where a student has given consent to share their needs assessment report with the College, it should be emailed directly to disability@bbk.ac.uk and not a named individual.

Revised Covid-19 NMH Information for Birkbeck, University of London

Birkbeck is teaching entirely online. This presents significant challenges for students with sensory impairments and cognitive impairments.

It is essential, in order that students can continue to study, that NMH support is in place from the start of the academic year. Where DSA provision is not in place, Birkbeck will implement interim-funded support. The list below sets out the main providers of this interim support.

Needs Assessors should assume this support is in place and confirm this with the student at the assessment. To ensure continuity of support, Birkbeck would request that the Needs Assessor identifies the interim support provider as the preferred provider in the Needs Assessment Report. Birkbeck would also request that the Needs Assessor recommends in their report that all interim funding costs are reimbursed to Birkbeck by SFE on provision of an invoice from the provider and appropriate documentation. This recommendation should be included in the Entitlement Letter.

We would like to request that the Needs Assessor clarifies with the student whether they are satisfied with the quality of the interim support they have received and, in that event, recommends the support continues with the same provider. Please consider that if a different provider is recommended this will lead to the termination of support from the current provider and a significant delay in the support provided to the student, impacting upon the student experience.

If you are recommending a different provider, we request that you state in your Needs Assessment Report that SFE should reimburse Birkbeck for the cost of the interim support implemented, as well as providing quotes for the new provider.

NMH rates

Band 3 Specialist Enabling Support

- Communication Support Worker: No interim support offered
- Electronic Note Taker providers:
 - Clarion
 - Complete Communications
- Live/Closed Captions provider: AI Media
- Mobility trainer: No interim support offered

Band 4 Specialist Access and Learning Facilitators

- Specialist Mentor (preferred for MH and ASD) provider: University Mentoring Organisation (UMO)
- Specialist One-to-One Study Skills Support provider: Clear Links
- Assistive Technology Trainer provider: B.I.T.T. Services
- BSL Interpreter provider: Terptree

Specialist Mentoring Organisations – Specialist Mentoring - MH and ASD

UMO have worked closely with Birkbeck for a number of years, and so can provide a joined-up service with regard to the provision of specialist mentoring support. UMO have access to rooms on site at Birkbeck. Currently, however, they are providing support remotely.

Assessors are asked to consider recommending UMO as a supplier of Band 4 specialist mentoring support – MH and ASD. Furthermore, in all cases where there is an urgent need for a specialist mentor to be allocated to a student, Birkbeck allocate them to a UMO mentor while they await their DSA assessment. We therefore request that Needs Assessors recommend that SFE reimburse the university for the full cost of the support.

Specialist One-to-One Study Skills

Whilst Birkbeck has comprehensive online teaching provision with a high level of accessibility and inclusion, students with cognitive deficits resulting from SpLDs are experiencing particular challenges with this.

To ensure they have access to specialist tuition to teach them strategies for managing these cognitive challenges, we are routinely implementing interim study skills support. Birkbeck is allocating to Clear Links while the student awaits their DSA assessment. We therefore

request that Needs Assessors recommend that SFE reimburse the university for the full cost of the support.

Electronic notetaking

Birkbeck refers deaf/hearing-impaired students requiring electronic notetaking to either Complete Communication or Clarion. The university is required to meet the cost of the support if the Entitlement Letter is not received before the provider's monthly invoice. We therefore request that Needs Assessors recommend that SFE reimburse the university for the full cost of the support.

BSL Interpreters

When asking agencies to provide quotes, it is important to emphasise to them that they are quoting rates for evening delivery.

As the majority of our lectures take place from 6:00-9:00 pm and it is not possible to provide regular breaks two interpreters will normally be required per lecture, as per NRCPD regulations. The College reserves the right to use other providers once the DSA has been exhausted.

The university is required to meet the cost of the support if the Entitlement Letter is not received before the provider's monthly invoice. We therefore request that Needs Assessors recommend that SFE reimburse the university for the full cost of the support.

Human Captions

Birkbeck refers deaf/hearing-impaired students requiring live captions to AI Media.

The important issue here is that AI Media charge a different rate to a university than they charge to SFE. If there is no Entitlement Letter, the support is charged at £65 per hour plus VAT. The university is required to meet the £65 per hour cost if the Entitlement Letter is not received before AI Media's monthly invoice. We therefore request that Needs Assessors recommend that SFE reimburse the university up to £65 per hour plus VAT (i.e. £78 per hour).

DSA Travel Allowance

Birkbeck is studying online for the whole of the 2020/21 academic year. However, Needs Assessors should keep in mind that we anticipate returning to face-to-face study so travel recommendations should be included in Needs Assessment Reports.

As Birkbeck uses some external venues for taught sessions, some students will be attending lectures at Friends House. The postal address for Friends House is on Euston Road, which is a red route, so taxis will not be able to stop there. Where this is the case, assessors should request that taxis stop at Endsleigh Gardens, where the taxi will be able to pick up/drop off the student without any problems. This should not affect the cost. As Birkbeck lecture venues often change on a termly basis you may be regularly asked to provide new taxi recommendations. The College will not meet any travel costs that exceed the DSA allowance.

College AT Provision

Microsoft Office and Course Specific Software

All students have access to MS Office 365 Pro Plus free of charge while they are on course. This is a full version of Microsoft Office. It includes Access, Excel, InfoPath, OneNote, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publisher and Word. Some course-specific software is also available to download via our website. Where their programme requires course-specific software, students should check the 'manage' menu in their My Birkbeck account for My Software.

Assistive Software

- Claro Read Pro - Birkbeck provide ongoing in-house support for Claro Read and also, where appropriate, Claro Read for use in exams.
- Claro Capture Pro
- Dragon - This is available in two rooms within the College; these rooms can only be booked by students who have a Study Support Plan in place.
- MindView - We also provide some limited in-house support for MindView.
- ZoomText
- Jaws
- Sonocent - this is the only AT software program which works with Panopto; the recording system Birkbeck uses. It is also supported on an inhouse basis.

Claro Read, Claro Capture and MindView are available on College computers for all students, not just those with a registered disability. Birkbeck does not have software licenses that can be given to students for their own home use.

Although students are currently studying online, it is important Needs Assessors recommend the above software packages so that students will be familiar with them when sitting College examinations.

Equipment

The following equipment may be available for use within certain areas of the College, such as the Accessibility Centre:

- Orthopaedic chairs
- Writing slopes
- Book rests
- Height Adjustable Desks (some manual, some electronic)

Some of this equipment can also be requested for taught sessions and exams, where required. College equipment must remain on Birkbeck premises at all times, we are not able to loan equipment to students for use outside the College.

College Support

1. Course Information

Inquirers can review the relevant course programme, including its learning and teaching methodology, on our websites. It is important that prospective students do this, particularly where they experience difficulties with examinations and field trips.

Departments are producing pre-recorded videos containing captions. Live teaching is conducted on MS Teams and/or Blackboard Collaborate. Most live teaching is not recorded. Teaching materials, e.g. PowerPoint slides, will ordinarily be available on Moodle in advance of teaching sessions. Teaching resources e.g. articles and journals ordinarily will be available in a PDF format and Sensus Access is available on Moodle.

2. Registering with the Disability and Dyslexia Service

Disabled students are invited to complete an online Study Support Plan, and provide medical evidence, on enrolment. It's important they do this to ensure adjustments are put in place.

3. College Reasonable Adjustments

Birkbeck has revised its reasonable adjustments recorded on the SSP to meet the specific needs of students studying online.

4. Computer Contribution

Birkbeck students who are in receipt of the DSA can apply for means-tested funding to meet the cost of the £200 student contribution towards the cost of a new computer which is recommended by their Needs Assessor. This is paid directly to the approved supplier when the order is made. It is the student's responsibility to complete the appropriate application and submit the financial evidence for assessment. It would be helpful for Needs Assessors to draw the student's attention to this, so they can apply in advance of receiving their Entitlement Letter.

5. Band 1 & 2 Non-Medical Help (NMH) support

If NMH support is identified in the needs assessment which falls outside current DSA provisions, such as Band 1 and 2 NMH support, assessors are asked to outline the difficulties that the student is likely to face with specific details relating to why DSA-funded support will not be sufficient. The Birkbeck Disability Service will then follow up with the student to assess what HEP support is appropriate, and whether the need can be met by the use of technology.

6. Alternative Formats

The Library can provide accessible PDF versions of core textbooks, where available.

7. Printing, photocopying and scanning

Access to College buildings is dependent upon government guidance. With the College teaching online, students are not ordinarily accessing Birkbeck buildings. Whilst some limited Library facilities are available, many disabled students will, for a variety of reasons, not be able to access these. Needs Assessors should therefore consider, under the circumstances, how these students will be able to access printing, photocopying and scanning facilities.

8. Coursework extensions

Birkbeck has revised its procedures on extensions. From September 2018 onwards, no students will be automatically granted extensions to coursework deadlines. Students can make a 'mitigating circumstances' claim for an additional two weeks if they have personal, medical or family problems etc. for doing so. Being disabled does not automatically constitute a mitigating circumstance, but a period of ill health due to an existing health condition may.

It is important to emphasize to students that we are anticipating they will make full use of both Birkbeck and DSA study support resources, in particular Non-Medical Help, to ensure they submit coursework to deadline.