

# Information for Needs Assessors

## Birkbeck's unique mission

Birkbeck provides evening education for mature students, predominantly studying part time.

Implications:

- Our mature, disabled students have 83% comorbidity and their multiple conditions and adult diagnoses of SpLDs mean that the majority are complex.
- As teaching takes place from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., Needs Assessors should ensure that agencies can provide coworking interpreters and electronic notetakers in the evening.
- Birkbeck uses multiple venues across central London and the venue for teaching can change on a termly basis, therefore Needs Assessors may need to regularly provide updated quotations for taxis.

## In-person needs assessments

With many of our students having complex needs, Birkbeck recommends that they have an in-person needs assessment.

If a student wants an in-person study needs assessment, they are able to book a room in our Library where this can be conducted. If a student is seeing a needs assessor in person, the needs assessor will need to email [librarydisability@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:librarydisability@bbk.ac.uk) 24 hours in advance to confirm their name and the time of arrival. The needs assessor should bring their Contact Associates ID with them to the appointment.

## Interim support provision

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 usually implement interim-funded support. The list below sets out the main providers of this interim support.

Needs Assessors should check at the assessment whether interim support is in place and whether the student is satisfied with it. If the student is satisfied, please recommend the interim provider in your Needs Assessment Report. If a different provider is recommended this will lead to the termination of support from the current provider and a delay in the support provided to the student, impacting upon the student experience.

Birkbeck would also request that the Needs Assessor recommends in their report that all interim funding costs are reimbursed to Birkbeck, or the agency, by SFE on provision of an invoice and appropriate documentation from the agency. This recommendation should be included in the Entitlement Letter.

## NMH providers

Birkbeck has worked closely with a number of providers in the past. These providers understand Birkbeck's internal arrangements and the facilities available at the university. It would help Birkbeck

to put high-quality support in place for students, if Needs Assessors were able to recommend these providers.

### Band 3 Specialist Enabling Support

- Communication support worker: No interim support offered
- Electronic notetaker providers:
  - Clarion
  - Complete Communication
- Live/closed captions provider: AI Media
- Mobility trainer: No interim support offered

### Band 4 Specialist Access and Learning Facilitators

- Specialist mentor provider (preferred for MH, ASD, and ADHD): 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: Complete Communication

## Teaching and learning, and assessment

Teaching can include pre-recorded videos, online or in-person lectures and seminars. 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.

Assessment is programme-specific and may include in-person or remote examinations, 48-hour take-home papers, essays, dissertations etc.

## College AT Provision

### Microsoft Office and Course-Specific Software

All students have access to [MS Office 365](#) free of charge while they are on course. This is a full version of Microsoft Office. It includes Excel, OneNote, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Word. Some course-specific software is also available to download via our website. Where their programme requires course-specific software, students should check in their My Birkbeck account for My Software.

### Assistive Software

- ClaroRead Pro - Birkbeck provide ongoing in-house support for ClaroRead and also, where appropriate, ClaroRead for use in exams.
- ClaroCapture Pro

- Dragon - This is available in three bookable rooms and on one loanable laptop within the College; these rooms and laptop 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
- Glean - this is the only AT software programme which works with Panopto; the recording system Birkbeck uses. It is also supported on an in-house basis.

ClaroRead, ClaroCapture 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.

It is important the 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)
- Large displays

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.

### 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.

### Student contribution to specialist equipment

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.

### 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

Wellbeing Services 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.

### Alternative Formats

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

### Coursework extensions

No students are 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 reasons 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 emphasise 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.

### Needs Assessment Reports

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](mailto:disability@bbk.ac.uk) and not a named individual.