



Information for Students with Disabilities, Physical and Mental Health Conditions and/or Specific Learning Difficulties

If you are offered a place in Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI), you may need supports and services to help you with your course. BFEI can apply, on your behalf, to SOLAS (the State Agency responsible for Further Education and Training). SOLAS aims to assist students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties to participate in Further Education. It provides grants towards the provision of services and the purchase of equipment for students with disabilities attending College. It is funded by the Irish Government and part funded by the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme. The level of services and supports you will receive will depend on the grant allocated by SOLAS and the availability of suitable staff to provide supports.

These are the kinds of supports which may be provided:

1. Exam considerations
2. General supports for all students such as study skills workshops, notes on the Institute's e-learning platform Moodle, access to the reading software Read and Write Gold which is installed on all computers including the computers in the Learning Centre and also workshops on assistive technology for students with disabilities.
3. Students with severe physical/mobility disabilities or who are blind/visually impaired may apply for a personal assistant.
4. Students who are profoundly deaf may apply for a sign language interpreter or a speedtext operator.
5. Students who have difficulties taking notes and where notes are not available on Moodle, may wish to apply for a Livescribe Echo pen to help with note-taking. This is fairly inexpensive and may be worth investing in before starting college. They can be ordered online.
6. Students may need to apply for specific assistive technology depending on their disability, for example, a blind student may need to use the Jaws software.
7. Students who struggle with comprehension of information, may wish to apply for a one hour weekly 1:1 or small group tutorial.
8. Students who have difficulties with reading comprehension and writing may wish to borrow a laptop. All the laptops have the following reading software: Read and Write Gold, Kurzweil and writing software, Dragon Naturally Speaking.
9. Students with serious physical/mobility difficulties or who are blind/visually impaired may apply for transport. Travel costs can be funded in these cases only where a student, because of their disability, would incur additional transport costs.

Depending on needs, students will only be provided with some of these supports and services, as the funding provided by the SOLAS is limited.

1. Who can apply for these supports?

To access any of the above supports in BFEI you must:

Have a verifiable disability – please refer to section 3 of this document for further information

- As a result of the disability, you must have a need for specific supports or assistance arising from attendance on your chosen course.
- Be legally resident in Ireland for at least 3 of the 5 years up to the day before your approved course commences in BFEI. If you do not qualify at the beginning of your course, it may be possible for you to meet this requirement during the course of your studies.

2. How do you apply for these supports?

First, you must fill in the ‘**BFEI Supplementary Application Form for Students with Disabilities, Physical and Mental Health Conditions and/or Specific Learning Difficulties**’. This is available from the Admissions Office (email office@bfei.ie or phone (01) 288 9717). You submit this form electronically. You must submit this form every year you attend BFEI if you wish to apply for any extra supports and services.

3. What documentation do you need to submit with your application?

- A. You will need to provide a report from a medical consultant and/or an educational psychologist – see [Appendix 1](#) for details. Your application for supports and services cannot be processed without this documentation.
- B. If relevant, you will also need a letter from your school or previous college which must include **all** of the following details: how long you attended the school/college, details of your disability and how much it has impacted on your learning, details of the supports/services you received in school/college and details of any exam considerations you received. This letter can be written by the School Principal, the Guidance Counsellor, the Special Needs Teacher or the Visiting Teacher.

A General Practitioner own diagnosis of a disability/condition is not acceptable as evidence of disability for the purposes of the Fund.

4. What happens after BFEI’s Disability Advisors receive your completed Supplementary Application Form?

When the supplementary application form and the supporting documentation is received by BFEI’s Disability Advisors, you will be contacted **by email** to arrange an appointment. It is **essential** therefore that you provide us with a current email address and check it regularly. In order to have your application processed in time for the closing dates, you will need to meet the Disability Advisor during the first two weeks in September.

Early application for supports and a meeting with the Disability Advisor is essential if you have a severe disability to ensure that necessary supports such as a sign language interpreter or a personal assistant can be put in place.

5. Can you get any supports for your exams?

Yes, based on your specific needs you can request exam considerations such as:

1. Extra time in exams
2. Alternative exam location
3. The use of a laptop computer and/or assistive technology
5. Spelling/grammar waiver**
6. A scribe
7. A reader

We allow a spelling and grammar waiver for exams only and not for assignments. This is because you can access alternative supports for assignments (spell checker on your computer/proof readers) which are not available in an exam setting. **See Appendix 2 for more details.

For those of you who apply for exam supports, you **must** attend a meeting with BFEI examination officers in January each year. You will be informed of the date and time of this meeting closer to the time.

6. How do you apply for exam considerations?

You will have applied when you submit the supplementary application form. You will need to provide this documentation:

- A. A letter from your school or previous college outlining the exam considerations you were given in any exams. In particular, state what supports you got in your Leaving Certificate, if relevant.
- B. A medical report **OR** a psycho-educational assessment (if you have a specific learning difficulty)

Assistance Dogs:

BFEI will welcome assistance dogs that are trained by an organisation accredited by Assistance Dogs Internation (ADI) and guide dogs trained by an organisation that is accepted by, and affiliated to, the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).

To protect the welfare of the animal and the safety of students and staff, no other animals or pets may be brought to the college.

Email office@bfei.ie or phone 01 – 288 9717 if you would like to talk to the Disability Advisor or Principal.

APPENDIX 1: To apply for supports, SOLAS require that you provide the following:

Disability	Evidence & Eligibility Criteria	Age of Report
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	A report from a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant Psychiatrist OR • Psychologist OR • Neurologist OR • Paediatrician providing a diagnosis of autism 	No age limit
Attention Deficit Disorder Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	A report from a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant Psychiatrist OR • Psychologist OR • Neurologist OR • Paediatrician providing a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD 	No age limit
Blind/Vision Impaired	A report from one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ophthalmologist/Ophthalmic Surgeon providing a diagnosis of severe reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses. The diagnosis must be in relation to Best Corrected Visual Acuity or Field of Vision • A letter from the National Council for the Blind Ireland confirming registration • A letter from the principal from a school for the Blind confirming attendance. 	No age limit
Deaf/Hard of hearing	A report from one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audiogram from a professionally qualified Audiologist and/or ENT Consultant, indicating moderate to profound bilateral hearing loss (i.e. above 40dB) • A letter from the principal from a school for the Deaf confirming attendance 	No age limit
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia)	A report from a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologist OR • Occupational Therapist OR • Chartered Physiotherapist OR • Neurologist diagnosing Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) 	No age limit
Mental Health Condition (For example, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Clinical Depression, Severe Anxiety, Severe Phobias, OCD, Severe Eating Disorders and Psychosis).	A report from a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant Psychiatrist OR • Specialist Registrar 	Less than 5 years
Neurological Condition	Neurological Conditions:	No age limit

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurologist OR • another relevant Consultant <p>Speech & Language Disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech and Language Therapist 	
Significant Ongoing Illness	<p>A report, diagnosing a significant ongoing illness such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist or paediatrician • Cystic Fibrosis: Consultant respiratory physician or pediatrician • Gastroenterology condition: Gastroenterologist • Other: Consultant/Consultant Registrar 	Less than 5 years
Physical/Mobility	<p>A report from an • Orthopaedic Consultant OR • other relevant specialist diagnosing a significant physical or mobility difficulty.</p>	No age limit
Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia and Dyscalculia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report of a psycho-educational assessment by a Psychologist OR • by an assessor (PATOSS accredited) diagnosing a Specific Learning Difficulty. <p>Students applying to the Fund may be asked for their latest assessment scores/educational reports to assist institutions in determining the appropriate level of support. All tests used in the assessment must be valid, reliable and age appropriate.</p>	No age limit
Speech and Language Communication Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report from a speech and language therapist 	No age limit

APPENDIX 2: Guidelines for Granting Reasonable Accommodations to Students with a Disability who have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty

These guidelines have been informed by the criteria applied by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in Ireland, and also by the criteria applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in the UK.

They are intended to assist FE Colleges when determining the examination accommodations that may be required by students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty. The need for a particular accommodation is determined through the needs assessment process, taking account of the student's individual needs, the impact of the disability in an examination setting and the resources of the Institute.

1. Students with a disability who demonstrate a lower than average writing speed or reading speed or working memory or processing speed (i.e. at or below a standard score of 89/23rd percentile) may require extra time in examinations.

2. Students with a disability who demonstrate one or more of the following may require a computer in examinations:
 - i. a lower than average writing speed (below 15wpm)
 - ii. a speed of processing at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile
 - iii. a level of legibility that would make the paper unreadable to an examiner
3. Students with disability who have a spelling attainment at or below a standard score of 70/ 2nd percentile may require the use of a scribe.
4. Students with a disability whose reading speed, accuracy or comprehension is at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile may require a reader in examinations.