



## 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 the Higher Education Authority (HEA) 'Fund for Students with Disabilities' for these supports and/or services. The level of services and supports you will receive will depend on the grant allocated by the HEA in a given year you have the right to appeal to the HEA if you are refused a grant.

### These are the kinds of supports which may be provided depending on the needs of the individual student:

- Exam considerations – see section 5 and 6.
- General supports for all students such as study skills workshops, assistive technology workshops, notes on the College's elearning platform, access on all college computers to reading software, Read and Write Gold.
- Students with severe physical/mobility disabilities or who are blind/visually impaired may apply for a personal assistant.
- Students who are profoundly deaf may apply for a sign language interpreter or a speedtext operator.
- Students who have difficulties taking notes may be issued, in certain circumstances and depending on availability, with a lecture recording device (Echo Livescribe Pen).
- Students may need to apply for specific assistive technology depending on their disability, for example, a student who is blind may need to use Jaws software.
- Students who struggle with comprehension of information, may wish to apply for a one hour weekly, one to one or small group tutorial. Please note this is dependent on the level of grant provided.
- 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.
- Students with serious physical/mobility difficulties or who are blind/visually impaired may require support with transport. Travel costs can be funded in these cases only where a student, because of their disability, would incur additional transport costs.

### 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 supports?**

You must fill in the online '**BFEI Supplementary Application Form for Students with Disabilities, Physical and Mental Health Conditions and/or Specific Learning Difficulties**'.

If you are returning to BFEI for another year, you must apply again and are required to complete only questions 1 to 6 and 15 to 17. You do not have to supply the supporting documentation again.

## **3. Please submit the following documentation by post.**

- 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. 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 Learning Support Teacher or the Visiting Teacher.

***Letters from GPs are not acceptable, in any circumstances, as an assessment of disability.***

## **4. What happens after BFEI's Disability Advisor receives your completed Supplementary Application Form?**

Having submitted an application and documentation you will be contacted **by email** to arrange an assessment of learning needs in late August or early September. It is **essential** therefore that you provide us with a current email address.

Please note the following closing dates:

- **Closing date for applications to the HEA Access Fund:** Friday 25th September 2020.  
Early application for supports and a needs assessment with the Disability Advisor is necessary in order to ensure that necessary supports such as a sign language interpreter or a personal assistant can be put in place. You may not be able to commence your course if these supports are not in place.

- In exceptional circumstances a **late closing date** may apply: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

## 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
4. Spelling/grammar waiver\*\*
5. A scribe
6. A reader

\*\*We allow a spelling and grammar waiver for exams only and not for assignments. See **Appendix 2** for more details.

## 6. How do you apply for exam considerations?

You apply to the Disability Advisor before Friday October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 and you need to supply both of the following:

- 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)

Email [office@bfei.ie](mailto:office@bfei.ie) if you would like to talk to the Disability Advisor or Principal.

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

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger’s syndrome)</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Appropriately qualified Consultant Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist OR Paediatrician who is a member of his or her professional or regulatory body
<b>Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) eligibility</b>	Where the above person has provided a diagnosis of autism or Asperger’s syndrome.
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Appropriately qualified Consultant Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist OR Paediatrician who is a member of his or her professional or regulatory body
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	Where the above person has provided a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD.
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Blind/Vision Impaired</b>
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	<p>One or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of disability from an Ophthalmologist/Ophthalmic Surgeon, with signature;</li> <li>• Letter from the National Council for the Blind confirming registration with the Council;</li> <li>• If a student has attended a school for the Blind, a letter on headed notepaper signed by the Principal which confirms attendance at the school.</li> </ul> <p>In the case of an Ophthalmologist/Ophthalmic Surgeon the evidence of disability should provide a diagnosis of severe reduction in vision that cannot be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses, thereby reducing the</p>

	person's ability to function at certain or all tasks. The diagnosis of a reduction in vision must be in relation to Best Corrected Visual Acuity or Field of Vision.
<b>Age of evidence of disability</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</b>
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An audiogram from a professionally qualified Audiologist and/or ENT Consultant, with signature, clearly indicating moderate to profound bilateral hearing loss (i.e. above 40dB).</li> <li>• If a student has attended a school for the Deaf, a letter on headed notepaper signed by the Principal which confirms attendance at the school.</li> </ul>
<b>Age of evidence of disability</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Mental Health Condition (including, but not exclusive to, the following: Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Clinical Depressive Conditions, Severe Anxiety, Severe Phobias, OCD, Severe Eating Disorders and Psychosis)</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Consultant Psychiatrist or Specialist Registrar who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	The report from the above should diagnose a significant mental health condition.
<b>Age of report</b>	The report should be <b>no older than five years</b> from the date of needs assessment.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Neurological Condition (including Brian Injury, Epilepsy, Speech &amp; Language Disabilities).</b>
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<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Neurological Conditions: Neurologist OR other relevant Consultant Speech & Language Disabilities: Speech and Language Therapist
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	The report from the above should diagnose a significant neurological condition.
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Significant Ongoing Illness</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist or paediatrician</li> <li>• Cystic Fibrosis: Consultant respiratory physician or pediatrician</li> <li>• Gastroenterology Conditions: Gastroenterologist</li> <li>• Others: Relevant Consultant in area of condition or Consultant Registrar.</li> </ul>
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	The report from the above, as appropriate, should diagnose a significant ongoing illness.
<b>Age of report</b>	The report should be <b>no older than five years</b> from the date of needs assessment.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Physical/mobility</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Orthopaedic Consultant or other relevant specialist appropriate to the disability/condition.
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	The report from the above should diagnose a significant physical or mobility difficulty.
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia)</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp;</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately qualified Psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.</li> </ul>

<b>signed by <u>each</u> of the following:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately qualified Occupational Therapist or Neurologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.</li> </ul>
<b>FSD eligibility requires both of the following:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A full psycho-educational assessment from the Psychologist diagnosing Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) <b>and</b></li> <li>2. A report by the Occupational Therapist/Neurologist diagnosing Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia).</li> </ol> <p>All tests used in the assessments must be current, valid, reliable and age appropriate.</p> <p>For the purposes of the Fund, the CAO/DARE Evidence of Disability Form is not acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability.</p>
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>General Learning Difficulties</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Appropriately qualified Psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	Full psycho-educational assessment from the above diagnosing a General Learning Difficulty. All tests used in the assessment must be current, valid, and reliable and age appropriate.
<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia or Dyscalculia)</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Appropriately qualified Psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body or an assessor who is accredited by PATOSS.
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	<p>Full psycho-educational assessment from the above diagnosing a Specific Learning Difficulty. All tests used in the assessment must be current, valid, reliable and age appropriate.</p> <p>For the purposes of the Fund the CAO/DARE Evidence of Disability Form is not acceptable evidence of disability for this category of disability.</p>

<b>Age of report</b>	No age limit
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<b>Disability</b>	<b>General Learning Difficulty (Including Intellectual Difficulty and Learning Difficulties resulting from an Acquired Brain Injury)</b>
<b>Report to be provided &amp; signed by</b>	Appropriately qualified Psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.
<b>FSD eligibility</b>	Full psycho-educational assessment from the above diagnosing a General Learning Difficulty. All tests used in the assessment must be current, valid, reliable and age appropriate.
<b>Age of report</b>	No time 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 89/23<sup>rd</sup> 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/ 16<sup>th</sup> 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/ 2<sup>nd</sup> 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/ 16<sup>th</sup> percentile may require a reader in examinations.