



Institúid Bhreisoideachais
na Carraige Duibhe

Blackrock Further
Education Institute

Additional Educational Needs Policy

**for Learners with Disabilities, Health Conditions and/or
Specific Learning Difficulties**

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Introduction

Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI) as a constituent College of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB), is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in education and to ensuring that learners with a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty have as complete and equitable access to and participation in all aspects of college life as can reasonably be provided.

BFEI welcomes and encourages applications from learners with a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty and endeavors to provide appropriate supports and services, within the limits of available resources.

Rights and Responsibilities of Learners

Learners with a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty have the following rights:

- Right to agreed reasonable and appropriate supports and services in accordance with the learner's disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty following an assessment of needs
- Right to appropriate confidentiality of records
- Right to be treated with dignity and respect

Learners with a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty have the following responsibilities:

- To apply for supports in a timely manner
- To provide documentation from an appropriate professional (e.g. Consultant, Psychologist, Pediatrician etc) that verifies the nature of the disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty
- To follow the procedure to request supports/services and to adhere to notified deadlines

Rights and Responsibilities of BFEI:

BFEI has the right to:

- Maintain academic standards.
- Request the appropriate documentation to verify the need for reasonable and appropriate supports and services
- Discuss the need for supports and services with learners.
- Select from equally effective reasonable and appropriate supports and services in consultation with learners
- Deny a request for supports and services if the documentation does not identify a specific disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty, if it fails to verify the need for the requested supports and services or if it is not provided in a timely manner.
- Refuse to provide supports and services that are inappropriate or unreasonable, including any that pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others, constitute a substantial change or alteration to an essential element of a course or programme, or pose undue financial or administrative hardship on the college.

BFEI has the responsibility to:

- Provide reasonable and appropriate supports and services for learners following a timely request by learners.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication except where the disclosure is authorised by learners.

Application for Supports

It will take time to put in place appropriate supports/services for learners. Learners who require supports to commence their course (for example, a sign language interpreter or a personal assistant) should inform the College when they apply for a place on their course. It may not be possible for learners to commence their course if supports/services required to assist them with their studies are not in place.

There is no obligation on learners to disclose a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty, however, the College encourages learners to make a disclosure so that they can be supported.

Pre-Admission Supports

Applicants who require assistance (e.g. a sign language interpreter, personal assistant etc.) to attend a pre-admission event, for example, an Open Day, interview or meeting should contact the Guidance Counsellor well in advance to allow BFEI to make appropriate arrangements which may take some time. Applicants who cannot attend on the scheduled date, should endeavor to give adequate notice to enable the timely cancellation of supports.

Supports to Attend College

Support and services are provided to Further Education learners with additional educational needs by the **SOLAS Fund for Learners with Disabilities**.

The purpose of the Fund for Learners with Disabilities (FSD) is to provide funding to higher and further education institutions to assist them in offering supports and services to eligible learners with disabilities so that they can participate on an equal basis with their peers. The FSD aims to support the personal, educational and professional development of the participating learner and contribute to the achievement of their full potential.

Applicants to this fund must meet certain nationality and residency criteria.

BFEI will make an application, on behalf of eligible, registered learners for funding to provide appropriate supports and services. The supports and services available at Further Education are different from those available in second level schools and in higher education institutes.

Applicants to the Disability Fund must:

- Complete an application form to request supports/services
- Meet with the Guidance Counsellor to complete a needs assessment
- Provide documentary evidence* verifying their disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty
- Meet notified deadlines

The level of supports/services allocated to learners will depend on the:

1. learners' needs
2. funding allocated by SOLAS
3. availability of suitable personnel to provide support
4. time available to source supports/services

***Documentary Evidence**

Reports must be provided on headed paper and must be signed by appropriately qualified professionals or members of professional/regulatory bodies. Original reports should be retained by the applicant and a photocopy should be provided to the College. A letter from a General Practitioner (GP) indicating a diagnosis is not adequate evidence for the purposes of the fund.

Support for Conditions

The Fund supports learners with a wide range of conditions including:

- Autism
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Blind/Visual Impairment
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (dyspraxia/dysgraphia)
- Mental Health Condition
- Neurological Condition
- Significant Ongoing Illness
- Speech and Language Communication Disorder
- Physical/mobility
- Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia or dyscalculia)

Examples of Supports

Supports available include:

- Use of assistive technology equipment and software e.g. laptop, smart pen, reading software
- Provision of non-medical helpers, e.g. personal assistant, notetaker
- Supports for learners who are deaf or hard of hearing e.g. Sign Language Interpreter
- Academic/Learning support, e.g. 1:1 or small group support
- Examination accommodations (as outlined below)
- Transport support

Funding is not provided for the following:

- Assessment or diagnosis of a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty
- Medical equipment, assistance or support
- Services that can reasonably be expected to be provided by another agency
- Support or assistance outside the academic year
- Staff training and development

Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

Reasonable accommodation in assessment procedures are designed to remove, as far as possible, the impact of a disability, health condition and/or specific learning difficulty on learners' performance and enable learners to access assessments on an equal basis with other learners.

Reasonable accommodations include the granting of extensions to assignment deadlines as well as exam accommodations.

Exam accommodations may include providing the following:

- A separate examination centre (may be shared with a small number of learners)
- Extra time/rest breaks
- A spelling and grammar waiver
- The use of a computer/software/assistive technology
- Presenting exam papers in alternative formats, e.g., in large print, as an audio file
- A reader or scribe (where the learner has a significant reading and writing difficulty)
- A sign language interpreter

The need for exam accommodations is determined through the needs' assessment process taking into account the:

1. learners' individual needs
2. impact of the additional need in an examination setting
3. supports provided at second level/college
4. available resources

Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs

Learners may be supported by guide and assistance dogs. Guide dogs must be trained by a service that is accepted by, and affiliated to, the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF). Assistance dogs must be trained by an organisation accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI). To protect the welfare of animals and the safety of learners and staff, no other animals or pets are allowed in the college.

Confidentiality

Information about disability, health conditions and/or learning difficulties is classified as sensitive personal data and will be stored securely and processed confidentially and respectfully.

Learners' written consent will be required in order for information to be shared.

Right to Appeal

Learners have the right to appeal decisions made, in relation to supports and services, by the Guidance Counsellor, to the College Principal or to the relevant section of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB).