
NEEDS ASSESSMENT STATEMENT



Introduction

As a specialist institution, it's important to the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) that Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Study Needs Assessors are able to make informed assessments which are fully in the context of our specialised, non-traditional learning and teaching practices.

Contained in this statement are the reasonable adjustments available across our campuses **to date**, delivered as part of our duty to meet the needs of our disabled students. As this is an ongoing process requiring investment in resource and staff development, we are committed to updating this statement regularly and at least annually.

Please see text in red for COVID-19 updates.

Purpose and scope

- This statement is to assist Needs Assessors when determining recommendations for our students.
- It is intended as a guide and may not contain specific course level detail of provision. Needs Assessors are recommended to continue to contact our campus Learning Support Managers and Dyslexia Advisers with more detailed queries.
- The statement articulates the **minimum level** of reasonable adjustment we are currently offering, which is subject to regular updates and amendments.

Our provision sits within Academic Services and covers our four main campuses in Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham and Rochester. We also have satellite provision based at Maidstone Studios and the Royal School of Needlework, based within Hampton Court Palace.

Our aim is to work with individual students to build independent learning strategies. We collaborate with academic staff to remove barriers to learning that some disabled students may encounter.

Students can expect

- A named Learning Support Manager and Dyslexia Adviser at each campus who will be the point of contact pre-entry and throughout the course.
- Meetings with the Learning Support Manager and Dyslexia Adviser both pre- and post-entry to establish any learning needs needing to be addressed at course level (including where alternative forms of assessment may be beneficial).
- **Due to agreed COVID-19 restrictions, the University will be restricting visitor access to its campuses. This means that for the foreseeable future, we cannot provide on-site space provision for use by external NMH workers. Exceptions can be made for support types that cannot be delivered remotely (for example, sighted guides, mobility guides, BSL support) but these need to be discussed and agreed with UCA staff in advance, so the necessary health and safety precautions can be undertaken.**
- Access to Dyslexia Advisers who are employed by us and who will undertake dyslexia screenings for individuals upon referral or request and provide individual support for students who are in the process of applying for DSA or waiting for DSA support to be put in place.
- Learning Support Managers and Dyslexia Advisers will assist students to apply for DSA and will offer support to contact external agencies including Diagnostic Assessors, Needs Assessors and NMH Providers.
- We are not registered as an NMH provider but we do have a number of specialist staff who are employed to assist students with applications for DSA, and offer pre-DSA support. This includes:
 - Dyslexia Tutors – 1 Adviser per campus, all year around
 - Learning Mentors – 2 Mentors per county delivering up to 20 hours support per week during term time

Study assistance

We employ a small team of Inclusion Assistants working on a part-time basis. The Inclusion Assistants provide non-specialist study and practical support. Needs Assessors should note that this provision is limited and cannot offer intensive one to one support for individual students.

The study assistance service is offered as roaming support across several students in the learning environment or as a drop-in service, and wherever possible provides individual students with appointments of up to one hour to assist with general study skills. The service does not provide notetaking. **Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this type of support work will need to be delivered remotely, wherever possible.**

Reasonable adjustments typically provided for our students

With their Learning Support Manager, the student completes an Individual Learning Plan, which is communicated to key staff who need to know about the student's access and learning needs. These plans can cover a range of adjustments, including:

- Accessible course materials delivered on the University's virtual learning platform, myUCA. The majority of our courses release learning materials post-lecture, with some providing notes in advance. Again, this is a developing area of practice so the Learning Support Manager can advise further at an individual course level.
- Access to learning support toolkits, including a range of assistive and enabling technologies and apps.
- Recording taught sessions (subject to rules governing the use of recordings for personal study only and specific consents for particular sessions, such as visiting lecturers).
- At present, we do not provide lecture capture as standard.
- Adjustments required in the teaching and learning setting (for example, group work, presentations or crits).
- Adjustments to assessment methods, wherever this is appropriate, and in line with course competency expectations.
- Extended Library loans.
- Facilitated access to the Library.
- Access to an alternative format service for course reading list material.

Access to IT and assistive technology

We deliver our courses on both Mac and PC platforms. We have open access suites at each campus that run occasional extended access and weekend openings. Access is not 24/7.

Free Wi-fi is available on all campuses.

At the time of writing we have limited availability of assistive software, which currently includes:

- Mind View Version 7 on PC and Mac
- Text Help Read and Write (Version 12 on PC, Version 7 on Mac)
- Dragon – available on laptops

We also have a limited number of Digital Voice Recorders that students can borrow from the Library. Students are encouraged to use mobile technology and make use of note-taking apps as we do not provide note-taking assistance.

Access to course information

All our students are provided with a course handbook in print and digital formats, with accessible formats available on request.

The handbook contains information on:

- Course structure and assessment points
- Learning and teaching methods, learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Reading lists

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

We use Blackboard as our VLE and courses are strongly encouraged to make course materials available in advance. This work is ongoing and courses are at varying stages of digital development (for example, not all courses provide lecture notes in advance). We ask Needs Assessors to discuss any recommendations for course materials in advance with Learning Support Managers prior to completing the final Needs Assessment Report.

Our VLE can be used for:

- Accessing timetables (**Note:** it is not always possible to timetable all taught sessions in advance and there are occasional requirements for timetable changes. In such cases, students have their Learning Support Manager as point of contact to co-ordinate the re-allocation of support).
- Accessing assignment briefs.
- Course assessment information and marks.
- Course materials can be made available in a range of formats subject to advance notification of need.

Alternative forms of assessment

Currently we support the use of alternative forms of assessment, where necessary. Individual arrangements can be made where we have evidence that a student cannot undertake an assessment task because of a disadvantage arising from the disability that cannot be mitigated for through support intervention. Arrangements may include:

- Submitting in alternative formats (for example, audio or film)
- Reduced written components
- Viva or interview

Decisions on alternative forms of assessment are subject to Programme Director and Examination Board approval and may not always be granted, particularly where the published assessment method is deemed to be the only means to demonstrate a required learning outcome.

General information about assessment practices

Assessment practice can take a range of forms – written assignments, reflective journals, blogs, reviews, presentations, group work and practical projects.

The final year is often the first time that some students are required to undertake extended research or writing, and therefore take-up for NMH support may be particularly high during this period.

Extensions policy

Disabled or SpLD students do not have an automatic right to request extensions other than those due to genuine mitigating circumstances.

The exceptions are:

- Students who have fluctuating or episodic conditions that are unpredictable in nature.
- Students who have been recently diagnosed and have not had sufficient time to access support sessions.

Library access and support

There is a Library on each campus with access to qualified Librarians, who help our students learn how to use information sources effectively and develop good research strategies.

The Librarians have a good understanding of the learning preferences of our students and the barriers to learning which some disabled/SpLD students face. They also work collaboratively with the Disability & SpLD team to produce inclusive and accessible learning and teaching materials, such as referencing guides.

Gateway Advisers are available during Library opening hours and provide assistance in finding and fetching books. Our Library catalogue is available online together with online journal collections, ebooks and other research tools.

The Library also provides:

- Extended loans
- Access to assistive software
- Laptop loans (including the assistive software detailed previously in this document)

Physical access

All of our main campuses have good levels of accessibility, with lift access in all buildings and disabled toilet facilities, including specialist provision on our Farnham and Epsom campuses. We are currently developing detailed information on accessible Teaching and Learning Environments and work closely with students pre-entry to discuss any adaptations that may be required to our spaces. It should be noted that accessibility at the Royal School of Needlework is limited due to the listed status of the building and adaptations will not be possible.

Accommodation

Disabled applicants are invited to contact the Accommodation Team to discuss any accommodation requirements. Wherever it is reasonable and practical, adaptations to student accommodation is made. Students are offered an access tour prior to joining UCA, to establish if any building adaptations may be required.

Travel and parking

Disabled parking is limited at our campus locations. We ask Needs Assessors to contact Learning Support Managers to establish where travel to campus may present mobility impaired students with particular challenges.

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