

Accessing Learning Support Procedures: Disability and Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) 2026-27

Scope and Purpose	This Accessing Learning Support Procedures document applies to all students at Belfast School of Theology
Implication of non-adherence	Breach of various statutory requirements as listed below
Compliance and Regulatory requirements	To comply with the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 (DDA) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO). Reference has also been made to the Equality Act 2010.
Policy Owner	Head of Education (with coordination from Head of Operations)
Roles and Responsibilities	Senior Leadership Team is responsible for the implementation of the policy. BST's Disability Support Officer has responsibility to ensure the guidelines meet current requirements.
Policy approval and review	This Policy is approved by the Board and will be reviewed at the end of each academic year or more often as required.
Related documents	Disability Policy for Students Document Guidelines
Date last reviewed	June 2026

Belfast School of Theology (BST) is committed to providing a supportive learning and community environment for all students with disabilities on all of its courses. This document focuses on implementation of the Disability Policy for Students and outlines the procedures by which students with disabilities or medical conditions can access support.

The term 'disabilities' is broadly defined and includes, but is not limited to, mobility and/or sensory impairments, medical conditions, mental health conditions and intellectual disability, autism (ASD) and specific learning difficulties (SLD), e.g. dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Outline of the Accessing Learning Support Process

The following is an outline of the process for accessing learning support. Further details regarding each step are given in the following sections of this document.

1. Students are requested to inform the Disability Support Officer (DSO) of any disability or SLD during the application and registration processes. Students may also inform the DSO at any time during their course. The DSO will give initial advice regarding accessing learning support, Disabled Students Allowance, etc.
2. The DSO meets with the student. An individual Student Disability/SLD Action Plan is completed, outlining academic and other support that will be provided. The student signs, indicating agreement with the provisions.
3. The DSO provides Academic Office with details of students eligible for extensions and Academic Office grants extensions when requested.
4. The DSO provides Academic Office with details of students requiring special arrangements for class tests and exams and Academic Office makes appropriate arrangements.
5. Lecturers are given details of students on their modules/courses and the appropriate provisions required (normally at the beginning of every semester or course). The Ministry Practice Programme Lead and the Operations Team are given appropriate information to guide the support for students (normally at the beginning of the academic year).
6. The Individual Student Disability/SLD Action Plan is reviewed annually, or more often if required.

Disability Support Officer

The Disability Support Officer (DSO) is responsible for the implementation of these procedures and is willing to meet with any applicant or student to discuss their requirements.

The DSO can be contacted at dso@bst.ac.uk

Declaring a disability or medical condition

Applicants for courses or students are not obliged to declare a disability or medical condition. However, support can obviously only be offered if the BST team has been made aware. In order to get appropriate support in place for the commencement of studies, the earlier BST can be informed the better. A student may choose to inform BST of a disability or medical condition at any stage after admission.

Summary of Requirements and Processes

There are three main categories of support available: for specific medical conditions, non-funded reasonable adjustments and funded support. Funded support is only available for students on accredited courses who are in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

Medical conditions

Following completion of the Student Data Collection Form, appropriate arrangements and procedures will be put in place.

Non-funded reasonable adjustments

BST is committed to making all reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, learning needs or medical conditions. The adjustments for individual students will be agreed through discussion with the Disability Support Officer (DSO). Common adjustments include provision of information in appropriate formats, provision of lecture notes in advance, extra time for exams, extensions for assignments, etc. See

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/adjustments-disabled-students-and-apprentices> for a more detailed list of possible adjustments.

Some evidence may be required, for example diagnostic reports or GP letters, for adjustments to be put in place.

Funded support

UK based students on accredited courses may be eligible for support funded through the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA). Funded support through DSA may include note-takers, provision of equipment, assistive software, etc.

Application for DSA is the responsibility of the student. Full details can be found on the Student Finance Northern Ireland website. An outline of the process is as follows:

- **Diagnostic Assessment**

This assessment is normally carried out by a Diagnostician or Educational Psychologist. The cost of this Assessment is met by the student. BST may contribute to the cost of the assessment if the subsequent application for DSA is successful **and** the assessment has been conducted by a provider agreed by the student and the Disability Support Officer prior to the assessment being carried out.

- **Disabled Students Allowance**

Once a Diagnostic Assessment has been obtained a student applying for/on an accredited course (full time or part time) may apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) from Student Finance NI.

The DSA 1 form requires the submission of evidence (e.g. Report, Consultant/GP letter, etc.). Forms are available at [Student Finance Forms - Student Finance NI](#)

Students with any disability or long-term medical condition are strongly encouraged to apply for Disabled Students Allowance.

- **Needs Assessment**

If DSA is granted it will specify that a Needs Assessment be carried out. The cost of this Assessment will be met by the DSA.

A copy of completed Needs Assessment will be sent directly to the student and the Education Authority.

The recommendations set out in the Needs Assessment will be mutually agreed by the Assessor and the student. The ultimate purpose of these recommendations (which are not course specific) is to help create independence - in effect, to learn techniques and strategies to assist learning.

The student will be asked with whom they would like to share the Assessment Report. Normally, with the consent of the student, a copy would be sent to the BST Disability Support Officer. It is understood that by consenting to forward this copy to the Disability Support Officer, the student is also consenting to the Report being made available to the Programme Lead and, through him/her, to appropriate staff.

Any copy received by BST will be held securely on the student's file. At every stage, it remains the *student's* Needs Assessment and they may share with anyone they wish to.

- **Implementation**

Appropriate non-funded support (as above) may be put in place while DSA and Needs Assessment are in process. Once a formal Needs Assessment has been received, the Disability Support Officer, supported by the Academic Office, is then responsible:

- to implement recommendations
- to inform tutors and other relevant staff (e.g. Library, IT)
- to regularly review provision with the student
- to keep up-to-date records.

Review

A review of the provision will be offered to the student at least once within each academic year - normally facilitated by the Disability Support Officer.

It is the responsibility of the student to inform the Disability Support Officer of any changes in circumstances.