
Support for Students with a Disability, Learning Difference or Neurodiversity

Adopted September 2022

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Review Date: 1 year

Introduction:

Bristol School of Acting (BSA) welcomes all feedback, whether positive or negative, and considers this to be a valuable source of information that will contribute to the School's continuous improvement of its services and the student experience. The information provided here offers guidance to students, staff and members of the public on how to raise a concern with the School.

Please note: BSA is a partner institution of Plymouth Marjon University (PMU) and as such, this policy mirrors PMU's policies and guidance for best practice.

Support for our students

At Bristol School of Acting (BSA), we welcome a diverse community and embrace differences.

Some of our students present learning differences through dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and others; mental health issues such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress; or exhibit neurodiversity, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Some students present physical or sensory impairments such as limited mobility, sight or hearing loss.

We support each student as an individual and will work with you to make appropriate adjustments to help you succeed in your training and reach your potential.

Accessibility

BSA's training building on Silver Street in Bristol is home to our Acting for Film, TV and New Media and our Acting and Devised Theatre degrees and takes place in a Victorian building. We regret to say that it is not currently fully accessible to those with limited mobility, however, our Acting for Stage and Screen and Technical Theatre Arts degrees at the Tobacco Factory Theatres are both fully accessible.

Applications, auditions & interviews

BSA is committed to supporting all applicants. You are encouraged to declare anything that might impact your training so that appropriate support can be put into place as soon as possible. We share any disclosure of a particular disability or impairment only with those who need to know, be it your tutor or staff at your audition.

You are not required to include this information when you apply, but we recommend that you do in order to give us time to prepare and arrange suitable support. It will also mean that we can provide appropriate arrangements during the admissions process, where possible.

During an audition/interview

- A member of the admissions team will be on hand for support
- Please tell us if you would like to be seen first and we can accommodate this
- Do not worry. The panel will be aware of your particular circumstances if you have shared that information with us when applying
- It's fine to ask the panel to repeat a question, or ask for alternative explanations

Remember that BSA welcomes and supports students who present learning differences, disabilities and neurodiversity.

Please note that all of our courses are physically demanding. Most auditions involve games or warm-up exercises that are physical and likely to include eye contact. Adjustments to these may not always be possible.

How does BSA support students?

Under the Equality Act 2010, all students have a right to reasonable adjustments. These are changes made to remove or reduce barriers to learning caused by differences or disability. For example, if someone is diagnosed with dyslexia, they can be given course materials in advance of a class. Reasonable adjustments are made on an individual basis in collaboration with students to ensure that the training is made as accessible as possible.

Any student who discloses a learning difference, disability, or neurodiversity will be offered a Learning Agreement. A Learning Agreement describes the nature of the difficulty the student is experiencing, and lays out the reasonable adjustments that BSA will put in place to support them. We will do this in collaboration with you and you will be able to agree who has access to the Learning Agreement - it won't be shared with anyone else.

You can speak to your Course Leader or Student Support Officer about any support or adjustments that will help you get the most from your training.

Once you are enrolled, any information you disclose to us will be kept confidential, and only shared with those people whom you choose. We manage all sensitive information according to our Data Protection Policy.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

If you have a learning difference, disability, neurodiversity or health issue, you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This is a government funded grant that you do not have to pay back, which can include the following provisions:

- Computer equipment and assistive technology
- 1:1 mental health mentoring, up to 30 sessions per year
- 1:1 study skills tuition, up to 30 sessions per year
- General allowances to cover the cost of printing, photocopying and other expenses

We will support you to make an application. The process can be complex and take several weeks from making the application to receiving support. We understand that if you are dealing with a learning difficulty or similar, filling in forms can be stressful. We will help you through each step until you have an outcome.

If you have declared a learning difference, disability, neurodiversity or a health problem on your application form we will get in touch with you at the start of term to discuss whether you would like to make an application for DSA.

Support for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

For students with specific learning difficulties, we can source an external specialist who can undertake a diagnostic assessment, if you do not already have one. You will need to pay for the initial assessment but the Disabled Students' Allowance will cover the cost of other support. You can arrange for some initial screening tests for free - e.g. for dyslexia - through us.

The Student Loans Company, who award DSA, may ask you to make a contribution to costs (for example, if you prefer an Apple Mac to a PC), but one-to-one study skills or mentoring support will be covered.

You may also receive additional funding for printer supplies and photocopying; you will need to submit receipts to the Student Loans Company at the end of the year for reimbursement.

Contact us

For further clarification regarding the information contained here, please email your Course Leader or Course Manager.