University College Birmingham Access Fund – Information and Guidance 2026-27

1. Overview

The University College Birmingham Access Fund aims to assist home students who need support to pay for a diagnostic test for dyslexia to support their application for DSA, their £200 for the DSA contribution fee for equipment or the cost of a mandatory eye test needed for a dyslexia assessment. The Access Fund is a financial support resource designed to assist as many eligible students as possible, taking into account their engagement and commitment to their course and helping them to achieve a positive outcome from their time at university.

Students who wish to apply for this fund will need to have seen our Disability and Neurodiversity Support team (DNS) at University College Birmingham prior to requesting an application form.

2. Eligibility

To apply for the Access Fund, you must meet all the eligibility criteria:

- Be an undergraduate or postgraduate student fully enrolled on a course at UCB
- Be studying on a full-time course
- Satisfy the residency criteria to be classed as a 'home' student for fee and funding purposes.
- Have a household income below £30,000 as assessed by Student Finance England[1]
- Have applied for all public funds accessible to you before applying for the Access Fund i.e., Student Finance maintenance loan
- Have a minimum of four weeks teaching remaining on your course at the point of application to the Access Fund. Applications submitted with fewer than four weeks remaining will not normally be considered.
- Have a minimum of one semester remaining on your course at the point of application to the fund if you are in your final year of study
- If applying for support with a diagnostic test to have had an assessment and confirmation from University College Birmingham's Disability and Neurodiversity Support team (DNS) that an external assessment is required
- If applying for the £200.00 contribution fee, you will need to have been assessed as eligible for the equipment support under DSA
- If applying for help with the cost of an eye test you will need to have been seen by University College Birmingham's Disability and Neurodiversity Support team and have confirmation the test is required

3. How to apply

To apply for financial support from the Access Fund you will need to do the following:

1. Ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria.
2. If applying for support with the cost of an assessment/eye test, see the Disability and Neurodiversity Support team (DNS) for an initial assessment
3. Email our Financial Support team (f.support@ucb.ac.uk) requesting an application form.
4. A member of the team will then send you the application form along with a guide on applying and eligibility criteria. You MUST read this before applying as ineligible applicants, or incomplete applications will not be considered.
5. Submit the completed application form along with all required evidence

[1] If your household income has been assessed as above £30,000, or you have not had your income assessed by Student Finance England and you still need support with funding you will need to apply for support through the

Note: Your application will not be assessed until you submit a full and complete application form, including all necessary evidence to complete an assessment.

4. Evidence

To support your Access Fund application, you will need to provide the following evidence, depending on what you are applying for support with.

Support with £200 DSA contribution

a) Your letter from DSA stating that you are required to pay £200 contribution cost for equipment
b) Proof of external funding – your letter showing your entitlement to Student Finance England and if eligible your letter showing your entitlement to the NHS bursary
c) Your household income record from Student Finance to be visible to University College Birmingham – a member of the team will check this when assessing your application using your Student ID number[2]

Support with the cost of a diagnostic assessment for dyslexia/ eye test for a dyslexia assessment

a) Proof of external funding – your letter showing your entitlement to Student Finance England and if eligible your letter showing your entitlement to the NHS bursary
b) To give permission for us to contact the University College Birmingham DNS team for confirmation you have been seen by them and are recommended to get a dyslexia assessment/eye test for a dyslexia assessment
c) Your household income record from Student Finance to be visible to University College Birmingham – a member of the team will check this when assessing your application using your Student ID number[3]

All evidence must be readable and accessible, sent in an accepted format (pdf, doc) and in English.

We may request further information or evidence, if it is deemed necessary.

Please note *that the Financial Support service (part of Student* ***Support****) only processes your data for specified purposes and if it is justified in accordance with data-protection law. The University uses the information that you give us when you apply for financial support for the purposes of assessing your eligibility for such support and to contact you regarding your application. The Financial Support team will keep your personal, sensitive data secure and will destroy these records after 7 years in accordance with our data retention schedule. Our administrative/managerial/ IT staff associated with the Financial Support Service are the only staff who have access to your data and will work with your data confidentially.*

[2] Please note if you have not had your income assessed for the current 26/27 academic year by Student Finance you can apply to have your income assessed by Student Finance England for the purposes of accessing

further funding from University College Birmingham. If you don't wish to do this, you will need to apply for support for funding through the University College Birmingham Hardship Fund

[3] Please note if you have not had your income assessed for the current 26/27 academic year by Student Finance you can apply to have your income assessed by Student Finance England for the purposes of accessing further funding from University College Birmingham. If you don't wish to do this, you will need to apply for support for funding through the University College Birmingham Hardship Fund

5. Application assessment process

Complete applications with all the required evidence will be assessed by the Financial Support team (Student Support).

Applications are means-tested, based on your household income. We use the information provided to us by Student Finance England (SFE) to see your household income.

Students are expected to apply to the Access Fund and receive a decision before paying any relevant cost.

In exceptional circumstances, where a student has already paid these costs and contacts the Financial Support team within a reasonable timeframe, a retrospective application may be considered.

The student will be required to complete an application form and provide all supporting evidence, including proof of payment, so that their eligibility can be assessed.

Consideration of a retrospective application does not guarantee an award; any support will remain subject to the student meeting all eligibility criteria, the cost being eligible under the Fund, and funding being available.

The University will determine whether the application has been made within a reasonable timeframe, taking account of the circumstances of the case.

Please note - If your household income is not visible to the team. we will ask that you contact SFE to allow University College Birmingham permission to access your household income record. We will be unable to assess your application until we have access to this information.

We will also contact the University College Birmingham Disability and Neurodiversity Support team (DNS) where appropriate to confirm eligibility.

We will consider all the information and evidence provided to us as part of the application.

Please be aware that complete applications take up to **10 working days** to assess, i.e., two weeks. This may be longer in busy periods or when the University is closed, i.e., for public holidays. This 10-day period will only start from the point we have received all evidence required.

6. Priorities for assistance

When assessing applications, priority is given to the following groups of students (in no particular order):

- Students with children (especially lone parents)
- Disabled students (especially where Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is unable to meet

particular, individual costs)
- Care leavers and students from Foyers, or those who are homeless
- Students that are estranged from their family

Please note that although the above-mentioned students are prioritised, they must still meet all the eligibility criteria.

7. Award Amounts

DSA Equipment Contribution Fee

When applying for support for the £200.00 contribution fee for DSA equipment, if your household income amount has been assessed as below £30,000 per annum, we will award the full amount of £200 needed for the contribution fee. If your household income is above £30,000 per annum, we will award 50% of the fee.

Support with the cost of any eye test

When applying for support for the cost of an eye test needed for a dyslexia assessment, if your household income amount has been assessed as being below £30,000 per annum, we will award an amount of up to a maximum of £25.00. If your household income is above £30,000, you will not be eligible for this element of the Access fund.

Diagnostic Testing

When applying for support for the cost of a diagnostic test, your level of award will be dependent on the household income amount. The thresholds and funding are as follows:

- £25,000 or below – 100% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500
- £25,000 - £27,500 – 50% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500
- £27,500 - £30,000 – 25% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500

IMPORTANT – The HE Access fund is a finite fund. No applicant is guaranteed an award of funding. We will only be able to award funding to eligible applicants if funding is available.

8. Payment arrangements for successful applications

Where an award is made, the maximum amount awarded will not exceed £500.00 where applicable.

If you are awarded support with your £200 contribution fee for DSA or for an eye test, this will be paid directly to you. It is your responsibility to pay this money to the relevant supplier to ensure that you can access your DSA funded equipment.

If you are awarded support with a diagnostic test and University College Birmingham are funding 100% of the cost, payment will be made directly to the assessor or relevant company when an invoice is submitted.

If you are awarded a percentage of the cost of your diagnostic test cost, you will need to submit evidence of the cost before we are able to award funding. This should be an official quote from the assessor who will be carrying out the assessment. Where possible, we will award funding once your test has been completed and receipts provided.

Any monetary payments will be made through our Aspire portal. Instructions will be sent to student email addresses once the award has been made. This will happen up to 2 working days after you have been contacted with your decision of an award for funding.

Important – If you are awarded funding and do not **attend** your assessment but are still charged, University College Birmingham will not pay for these costs.

9. Applying for the Access Fund more than once

If your application to the Access Fund is unsuccessful due to household income and your circumstances change making you eligible, you may apply more than once to the fund.

Students can apply for support with both the DSA funding contribution amount and funding for the cost of a diagnostic test.

Students are not eligible to apply more than once for the cost of a diagnostic test if they have already received funding for this during their time as a student at University College Birmingham, unless in exceptional circumstances.

10. Appeals Process

If you are dissatisfied with the decision regarding the outcome of your application, you may appeal within **2 weeks** of receiving your outcome email to the Financial Support team (Student Services).

Your appeal will be considered by either the Director of Student Services and Wellbeing or a nominated deputy.