



**SU** BAME  
STUDENTS'  
NETWORK



# BAME SUPPORT

**GUIDE**



**BIRKBECK  
STUDENTS'  
UNION**  
HERE FOR YOU



# Hey, I'm Lily, your BAME Students' Liberation Leader of 2023/24!



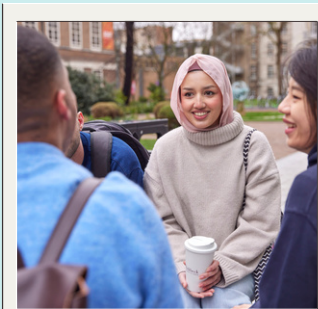
I have created this support guide to help you alongside your learning journey whether you are a new, current, or returning student!

The inspiration for this guide came from the struggles I faced during my time as a student going from a foundation year, up until completing my masters. I can certainly say it is no easy task being a student and no matter your background, this guide endeavours to support you in the best way possible. You can look to it as your friend to turn to whenever you need to find out information on most areas relating you are your academic and social experience!

This is a guide to help you understand some of the words and phrases that you might hear at university. This guide is great for students who are about to start their university studies, but it can also be useful for students who are already studying at university. Sometimes, the people who work at the university might use words and phrases that are new to you and expect that you know what they mean when they talk about things like office hours, learning outcomes, modules, or diverse ways of testing your knowledge. When you are new to university, it can be hard to ask questions in person about the language of higher education and what things mean, who does what at the university, how you will learn and be tested, and what you need to do as a student. In this guide, we have tried to answer some of the questions that you might have as you get used to university life and learn about the different ideas, structures, and processes.

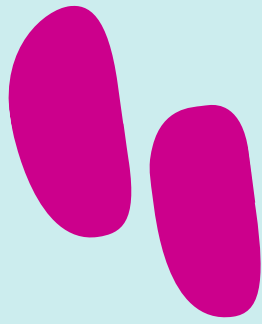
*This resource was taken in inspiration of work commissioned by QAA Membership on what a hidden curriculum can entail.*

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Please note, some terms may be used in slightly diverse ways, depending on your course and your university, but we have tried to find things that are common across all universities. For example, we have used 'school' and 'department' to refer to the organisational unit that delivers your teaching, but it might also be referred to as a 'college' or 'institute' in your university. We hope this document will give you information to start you off on your exciting learning journey.



# University Life





# University Life

Studying in the evening does not mean you cannot get the full student experience of life at a vibrant city-centre university. As a Birkbeck student, you can choose as much or as little of the standard university experience as you like. You might work during the day, study, undertake an internship - or do something completely different.

Birkbeck offers a unique combination of evening study and a matchless central London location, right in the geographic and academic centre of the city, giving you exceptional opportunities. Birkbeck offers a famously friendly, welcoming environment and we will be with you every step of the way, offering academic support and pastoral guidance whenever you need it. Many people are drawn to Birkbeck because we support and enable diverse life choices.

## Personal Tutor

Your personal tutor is an academic member of staff who will give you advice and guidance throughout your degree. The precise role of the personal tutor will vary across different universities, but you should expect them to help you navigate all the academic aspects of university. They may also be the person who provides you with a reference for a job when you move on from university.

01



## Office Hours

Office hours are the time when academic staff will be available for you to see them, to discuss anything you need to. This can be in-person in their office or online as a virtual one-to-one. You can often contact academic staff outside this time via email too.

02



# 03



## Students' Union

As an independent body, a Students' Union is the voices of their students. Students can elect peers to take on full-time roles as their representatives at the most senior levels within the university or college. These representative bodies consider the wider experience of students, often offering opportunities to engage in sport and social activities, develop skills and employability, and giving independent advice on the provider's policy and regulations and supporting students to navigate student life.

We have our own Students' Union (SU), which is students' interests via campaigns related to the environment, equality, and extended student services. The SU's societies and clubs are a wonderful way to spend time engaged in activities you love and discover one or two new ones. You can join clubs for sports including climbing, football, rowing, and scuba diving. Societies cover academic interests and cultural groups. The SU is a wonderful place to meet students across other courses and departments and experience the essence of the College. You could even be Birkbeck by becoming a student officer, representative, or appearing on University Challenge!

The "Your Wellbeing" section on the Student Union website serves as a resource hub tailored to support students during their time at university. It offers a wealth of valuable information, tips, and resources covering various crucial topics. These include insights on managing the cost of living, enhancing wellbeing through reading, combating student loneliness, perfecting learning experiences at Birkbeck, and prioritizing safety on campus. Among these sections, the "Safety on Campus" page stands out as essential reading. It offers indispensable guidance on safeguarding oneself and others within the campus environment. Topics addressed include safety measures for nights out, proactive bystander interventions, available support avenues, and a vital exploration of consent principles. If you only have time to exploration only one page, prioritizing the "Safety on Campus" section is highly recommended due to its wealth of information aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students. – William Sarenden, Welfare Officer.

The Student Union is proud to have many students representing different communities to ensure it is making decisions that helps it members (you!) – Check out our dedicated website on this via <https://www.birkbeckunion.org/your-voice/student-parliament/> (you will need to log into the SU website to see).



# 04



## Clubs and Societies

Your Students' Union will support student organised clubs and societies. You will have the opportunity to join these clubs and societies and they are likely to share information, for example by having a stall at a fresher's fair. Societies can be social, skills or hobbies based, subject based, or involved in social action, such as supporting student wellbeing or helping in schools. If you have an idea for a society that does not yet exist, you can talk to the Students' Union and apply to form the society. Societies are usually run by committees, and becoming involved in organising a

society can be rewarding, and look good on your CV. We highly suggest you have a look at the different networks offered. There is a range from Disability Network, Women's Network, International Network, LGBTQ+ and Trans Networks, Postgraduate Networks and of course your BAME Network!

# 05



## BAME Network

If you are a student who identifies as BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic), or POC (People of Colour) then I encourage you to get involved with this network by getting a FREE membership. To sign up, visit the student union's website and register with your student log in details. Join Birkbeck Students' Union BAME Network to get the latest information on events, campaigns, activities, mixers and much more. As a student you would not want to miss all the fun things the university and the student union does to have influence on your experience. Being a part of this network can help create change

and be effective to the university atmosphere socially and academically. Being a part of this network can create a positive, fruitful, adventurous, and ever-growing experience to your studies and community. Join now and don't miss out! – Lily Boodhoo, BAME Officer.

# 06



## Disability Network

Disabled Students Network is a dedicated community committed to championing accessibility, support, and empowerment for students with disabilities. Our network is designed for disabled students to connect, share experiences, and advocate for positive change on campus and beyond plus to feel a sense of community here on campus. Membership in the Birkbeck Disabled Students Network is free and open to all students with disabilities. Together, we can work towards a more accessible, fair, and inclusive campus environment where every student can thrive. This network is run by students for students. – Interim Disability Officer.

## Women's Network

The Women's Network at Birkbeck is centred around fostering an inclusive environment where lasting connections are made. As the largest network within our university, we pride ourselves on creating a supportive space for women and non-binary individuals, ensuring that there's always someone to turn to. Our network is focused on building a community where every member feels valued and supported. Membership is open to all students and staff at Birkbeck who share in our commitment to inclusivity and mutual support. Joining the Women's Network means becoming part of a vibrant community where communication and connection are at the heart of everything we do. Through our highly active communication channels and regular meetups, we ensure that members have continuous access to a supportive circle. The importance of the Women's Network lies in its role as a sanctuary for those seeking companionship, advice, or simply a friendly face. We believe in the power of unity and shared experiences to foster an environment where everyone can thrive. Our activities are designed to cater to the diverse needs of our members. – Miriam Swan, Women's Officer.

07



## International Network

Here, the world comes together to thrive, connect, and celebrate diversity. Whether you're from bustling cities or serene villages, this is your home away from home. Join us and embark on a journey of friendship, cultural exchange, and unforgettable experiences! At our network, every soul is cherished, every story celebrated. It's a vibrant hub where you can forge lifelong connections, share your traditions, and explore new horizons. From enlightening mixers to exciting events, our calendar is packed with opportunities to bond and have a blast! This year, our dynamic duo, Ellie and William, are steering the ship, ensuring your experience is nothing short of extraordinary. With their passion and dedication, rest assured, you're in good hands! So, what are you waiting for? Dive into our community, connect with us on Instagram, drop us an email, or join our WhatsApp chat (please do email Ellie or William for this so we can add you!). We can't wait to welcome you with open arms and create beautiful memories together. – William Sarenden and Ellie Rivera, International Officers.

08





# 09



## LGBTQ+ Network

The LGBTQ+ Network is a vibrant community dedicated to fostering inclusivity, support, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ students within Birkbeck. Founded on the principles of respect, acceptance, and celebration of diversity, our network provides a safe and welcoming space for all members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. Membership in the Birkbeck LGBTQ+ Network is completely free, and all are welcome to join. Whether you identify as LGBTQ+ or simply want to show your support as an ally, we invite you to become a part of our inclusive and empowering community.

Together, we can create a campus environment where everyone feels accepted, respected, and celebrated for who they are. This network is run by students for students. – Interim LGBTQ+ Officer

# 10



## Postgraduate Network

If you're a postgraduate student at Birkbeck, I encourage you to join the FREE Birkbeck Students' Union Postgraduate Network. Being part of this network provides you with opportunities to connect with fellow postgraduates, share experiences, and engage in activities that enhance your student experience. The network hosts events, supports student representation, and fosters a sense of community among postgraduates. To join the Postgraduate Network, please log in to the Birkbeck Students' Union website. Remember that Birkbeck is home to a diverse range of students with varying interests and calendars, so taking part in this

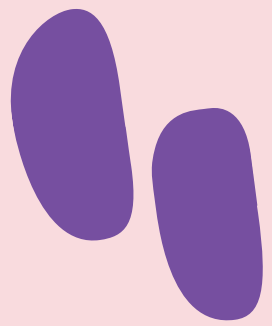
network can help you feel connected and supported during your studies. Remember that your voice matters, and by joining the Postgraduate Network, you contribute to making Birkbeck an even better place for all students! – Interim Postgraduate Officer

# 11



## Accommodation and Living Cost

While most of our students live in private accommodation, we also offer student accommodation. Birkbeck students can access places in University of London intercollegiate halls and with several private providers. Free professional advice is available from the University of London Housing Services. You can also arrange a homestay with a host family if you would like to experience the local lifestyle and language in a unique way.



## Social life

Birkbeck has a range of cafes, coffee shops and a bar, as do the other nearby University of London Colleges. Torrington Square is also home to the popular weekly Bloomsbury Farmers' Market, where you can try an exciting range of cuisines. With the West End, Soho, Covent Garden and King's Cross on our doorstep you can take full advantage of London's shops, restaurants, bars, theatres, and clubs before and after your evening classes. We are one of the best universities for nightlife. There is always something going on at Birkbeck, from public lectures to

conferences to seminars. Visit our events feed. We also have our own award-winning cinema at 43 Gordon Square, which hosts regular free film screenings, and the Peltz Gallery in our School of Arts hosts curated displays, exhibitions, and events. We also have annual events and event series, such as Arts Week, Science Week, and the One World Festival, and dedicated extra-curricular trips for international students.

# 12



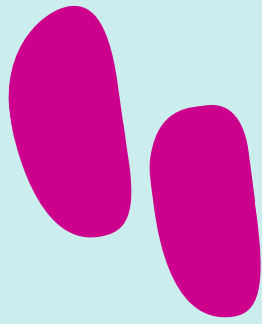
## Learning Support

Moodle, our online learning environment, allows you to chat with your lecturer and other students about classes and topics. If you miss a class, you can access material and join the discussion online. You may also be able to watch videos of your lectures.

Our Learning Development Service supports undergraduate and postgraduate students in every area needed to become a successful student, including free workshops, accessible learning materials, and one-to-one meetings. We offer English language and academic writing courses for undergraduate students, including pre-sessional English short courses.

# 13





# Funding





# University Life



University can be tough to finance and keep up with living costs. Below is a few hardship funds, bursaries, and discounts that you might be eligible for if you are having financial difficulties.

## Diversity one hundred (PHD Students)

Diversity100 is a scholarship program that aims to increase the diversity of academic researchers in all fields of study. It supports Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students who want to pursue a PhD and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The studentships cover all tuition fees (£4,712 a year for 2023/24) and provide a tax-free stipend for living expenses at the same rate as UK Research Council funded studentships (£20,622 a year for 2023/24) for up to three years full time or five years part time. Applicants should be new PhD students or current Birkbeck PhD students who have at least 50% of their research remaining.

[How to apply](#)

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## Hardship Fund

If you are a current student and you have experienced an unforeseen change of circumstance in your personal situation while studying, such as redundancy, illness or domestic problems, the Birkbeck Hardship Fund may be able to help you.

[How to apply](#)

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## The Black Heard Scholars Programme

There are many scholarships for students who want to pursue higher education. Whether they want to study in a classroom or learn by doing (like research or fieldwork), they can get funding to help them pay for their education. These scholarships are for students who come from low-income families, and they do not depend on their ethnicity.

[More Information](#)

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## The Geospatial Scholarship Fund

If you love exploring the Earth and its wonders, you might be interested in these scholarships. They are designed to help students with Black or mixed Black heritage who want to study geography or geoscience at a UK university. You can apply if you have an offer for an undergraduate degree in geography or a related geoscience field, or a master's degree in GIS. You also need to qualify for home fee status. These scholarships are a fantastic opportunity to pursue your passion and learn more about our planet.

[More Information](#)





### Law Society Diversity Access Scheme

The Law Society Diversity Access Scheme gives money to students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who dream of being solicitors. They want to make the law fairer and more diverse.

[More Information](#)



### The Miranda Brawn Diversity Leadership Scholarship

The foundation is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion in society. It recognises the potential of future leaders who value and promote diversity in their fields. That is why it offers annual diversity leadership scholarships to support full time students at any UK educational institution. The scholarships are designed to help them achieve their academic and professional goals.

[More Information](#)

## Other Financial Support

### Totum

Totum is card for current students which can get discounts in high street stores, food, health & fitness, and lots more.

[More Information](#)



### Cost of Living Support

Cost of Living Support for Students, a webpage dedicated to helping you achieve your financial goals. Here, you will find useful tips, resources, and tools to help you manage your expenses, increase your income, and plan for your future. Whether you are studying at home or abroad, we have something for you.

[More Information](#)

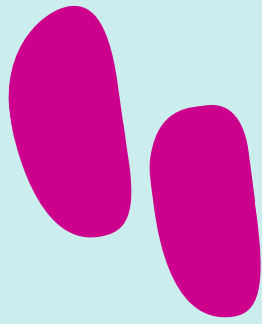
Birkbeck, University of London, and the Birkbeck Students' Union are working together to support students with the effects of the rising cost of living. We recognise that many of our students may be facing difficulties with finances with an impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Birkbeck is committed to providing support to our diverse community of scholars.

The College is making changes to its teaching and service delivery informed by student feedback, as well as putting in place new measures in response to the effects of the pandemic and rising cost of living. This work is all aimed at improving your experience with us and includes but is not limited to:

- The formation of the Cost of Living Working Group, forming both College and Students' Union (SU) staff to respond to the rising cost of living and improve support for students.
- The delivery of Food Pantry events, where students can access non-perishable goods at no cost, run by the SU and Student Advice Service, with more dates being planned.
- Changes to our teaching model to provide more flexible learning that combines in-person and online teaching with the highest quality online learning resources and services, reducing the frequency, time, and cost of travelling to campus and allowing for a better work-life-study balance overall.
- Piloting a Student Engagement and Success Programme, including ongoing focus groups to hear directly from students about their changing needs.

Additionally, students can find a list of London boroughs offering cost of living support to its residents on the Birkbeck Students' Union website.





# **who's who at University**



# Who's Who at University?

You will meet a lot of distinct roles and job titles in university life...

## Who stands for you?

Each course will have some students who are chosen by their fellow students to be their concerns. They are often referred to as student representatives, but this will vary across universities. Different universities and departments will have diverse types of student representatives. For example, you may have student representatives that act on behalf of the whole course, or you could have representatives for each year group. If you have concerns or positive feedback about your course, you can talk to your student representative who will raise this in the proper forum. You also have representation beyond your department, for example the Students' Union.

Find out who your representation is [here](#) for your course.



## Postgraduate Students

Postgraduate students are students who, typically, have completed an undergraduate degree and are undertaking further study. There are two types of postgraduate student - taught and research. Taught postgraduates will usually be studying for a masters' degree, while research postgraduates will usually be studying for a PhD.

## Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/Reader/Associate Professor

Lecturers, or Senior Lecturers (sometimes called a Reader or Associate Professor), are academic staff who often teach and assess you on your course. As well as teaching, lecturers will often conduct their own research, publish journal articles, apply for grant funding to support the research activity within the department, and peer review other people's research.



# Welcome Week

A 'fresher' is a student who has just started their first year at a university however this is an old term and now Freshers week is called Welcome Week. The university and the Students' Union will organise events which are designed to welcome students to their university. These are known as welcome events and will often include a societies fair, and social occasions, such as parties and balls. Commercial organisations will also often organise events, and you should ensure that you know whether events are sanctioned by the university or not. Welcome' week is usually a week before teaching starts during Autumn term, when you will be expected to attend induction activities organised both by your teaching department and the university.



## Demonstrator

If you are studying a science or practice-based subject, demonstrators will often help you with the practical components of the course. Demonstrators typically have a degree (or equivalent experience) in the relevant subject and can often be studying for a higher degree, such as a PhD. They will aid you in using equipment and may give advice on writing assignments.

## Professor

Professors are the highest rank of academic staff in a university. In the UK, around one in ten academics is a professor. In the UK, being appointed to a professorship is part of a promotion procedure, and staff will need to meet certain criteria relating to their role. There are also named professors, who are given 'a chair' normally named after an individual who has made significant achievements or named after the funder of the professorship. These are particularly prestigious. Professors who have retired but are continuing to contribute to the work of the university have the title Professor Emeritus/a





## Senior Management within the Department and University

Each department or school will have a Head of School/Department who handles the overall management. Also, most schools or departments will have a role such as a Programme Director. This person handles the teaching and learning provision in the school and oversees quality assurance of teaching in the school. In most universities, a school will be part of a faculty or college (a faculty is a collection of schools that share related interests).

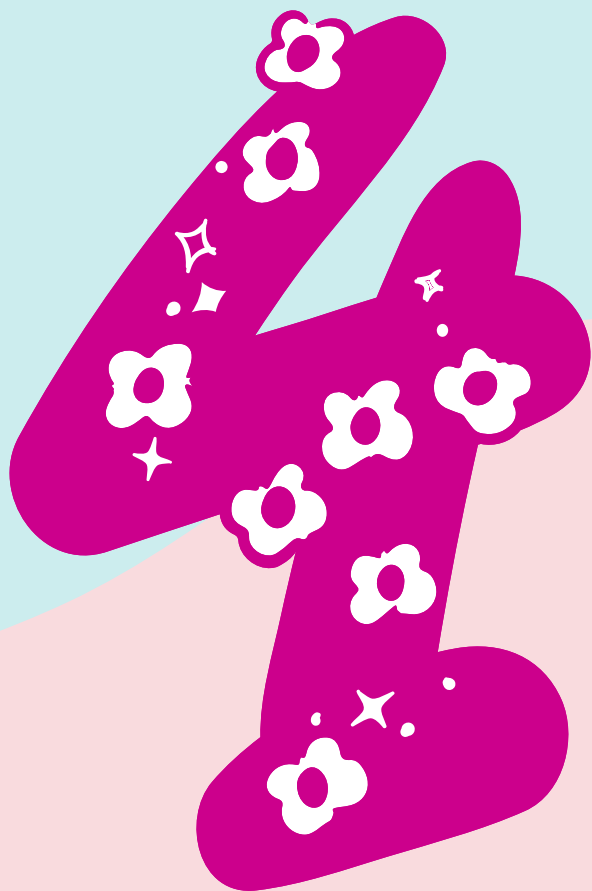
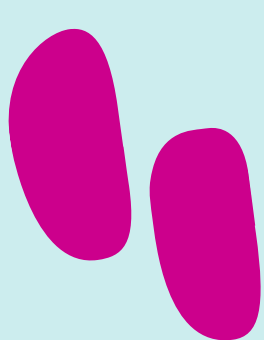
## Student Union Leaders

The Student Union is run by students for students. It is not part of the University but works very closely to ensure that the University is run in a way that benefits students. As of currently the Union is led by eight elected students who are paid to be students views to the top of the University.

- Welfare Student Leader
- Education Student Leader
- BAME Liberation Leader
- LGBTQ+ Liberation Leader
- Women's Liberation Leader
- Disability Liberation Leader
- International Students' Liberation Leader

Find out more about your elected leaders [here](#)





# Support Services





# Support Services

Universities provide a great deal of support outside the taught academic content. You should make the most of these services, as they will really help you to navigate the academic experience and help you to get the most out of your time at university.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

There are different people and services who will support you with different academic issues during your time at university. The names of these services will vary across universities:

- Academic librarians can help you to find journal articles, access books and search for literature. They are also responsible for archiving materials in the library and helping you to access anything you need from the library for your course.
- IT services will provide IT support and will have plenty of 'how to' guides for students.
- Disability Services can help students access study support.
- The Student Counselling Service will support students who experience mental health issues while studying.
- Each school will have administrators who support each course. Get to know your school administrators - they are there to help you and can help you find answers to your questions and direct you to other sources of help and information.
- Quality teams play a vital role in supporting and enhancing the student experience. They are tasked with assuring the quality of higher education delivered by your university in finding and providing opportunities for improvement (or enhancement). From constructive engagement with course design and revalidation processes (i.e. ensuring that a course is fit for purpose), to the monitoring of examination boards and managing student concerns, the quality team helps to ensure that students receive the higher education programme they signed up for.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

If you have a disability, which is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities, your university's Disability Services will be able to provide you with support. You should make an appointment as soon as you can to speak to someone in the disability service. They will help you navigate the university's procedures, apply for funding when needed, and can provide support services. They will work with you and your academic department to make sure that teaching and assessment is inclusive and accessible.

## EMPLOYABILITY

Employability is about supporting you to get the job you want when you graduate. Your university's careers centre will provide you with lots of support, including help with your CV, mock interviews, practice assessment centres, and other preparation for applying and getting a job. There will also be opportunities in your degree to practice skills that are relevant to employment, such as group work and presentations. Some courses will also have modules that require placements and other types of career training. The careers centre and/or your department may organise careers events to introduce you to diverse types of careers.

## CHAPLAINCY

The Chaplaincy looks to serve and support our students and staff in the practice of their faith. It is available to those with religious or philosophical world views.

[More Information](#)

## MULTI FAITH ROOM

Birkbeck's multi-faith room (found in B06) is available to Birkbeck students and staff of all faiths, and of no faith, for prayer and quiet contemplation. The room is shared, and users will respect others who wish to use it and respect one another's beliefs and practices. You can access the room using your Birkbeck Student ID card. If you have any difficulty with this please visit the Security Office in Room B28.

### *GUIDANCE AND EXPECTATIONS OF USE:*

- No icons or posters can be displayed in the room.
- The room must be kept clean and tidy.
- All objects used for prayer and contemplation must be removed from the room after use.
- Users of the facility must understand and follow college policies on equality and dignity at work and study.
- The room is provided and managed by Birkbeck, and the location of the facility may change.
- The College will review provision of washing facilities once the room is in use.

## HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Visit <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/healthcare-services> for more information.

Student mental health is important to universities and there are a variety of support systems in place. If your mental health has a substantial long-term negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities, you should seek support from your university's Disability Services. It is also advisable to register with a local GP near your university and/or accommodation and use them or the wider NHS for mental health treatment as needed. Other services available through the university will include the university's Student Counselling Service, peer support services, and online services. You should look at your university's webpages for contact details and referral methods. If you are struggling with your mental health, try to keep your teaching department informed, and remember you can apply for mitigation if needed so that your academic work does not suffer as a result.



# Charities to Support You or Get Involved in

## BLACK MINDS MATTER

Black Minds Matter UK is a charity that helps Black people access free therapy from Black therapists who are qualified and accredited. They work with a group of Black therapists who share their vision of removing stigma and redefining mental health experiences for Black people.

[More Information](#)

## SIKH YOUR MIND

Sikh your mind offers culturally sensitive and psychological support for Sikh and Punjabi communities.

[More Information](#)

## STUDENT SPACE FROM STUDENT MINDS

Student Minds are a charity committed to improving Student Mental Health. The charity has lots of diverse types of support including a Student Space website with lots of information such as Mental Health, Tools for Studying, Second Term Support and lots more. The Charity also have a 24-hour text support (as well as email and webchat support too).

[More Information](#)

## THE EMPOWERMENT GROUP

Is a charity that understands the cultural importance of Black therapists supporting their communities. They offer heavily subsidised online one to one counselling sessions for Black individuals in the UK aged 18+.

Online contact form: [www.theempowermentgroup.co.uk/contactus](http://www.theempowermentgroup.co.uk/contactus)

Website: [www.theempowermentgroup.co.uk](http://www.theempowermentgroup.co.uk)

## BAATN THE BLACK, AFRICAN AND ASIAN THERAPY NETWORK

Home of the largest community of Counsellors and Psychotherapists of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean Heritage in the UK.

Website: [www.baatn.org.uk](http://www.baatn.org.uk)

## MIND: YOUNG BLACK MEN

This is a programme through which works specifically with young Black men aged between 11 and 30 years old.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393

Email: [equality@mind.org.uk](mailto:equality@mind.org.uk)

Website: [www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/equality-and-human-rights/young-black-men](http://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/equality-and-human-rights/young-black-men)

## BAYO

Bayo is a space to find collectives, organisations, and services from across the UK. Bayo is created by and for the Black community to support mental health and wellbeing.

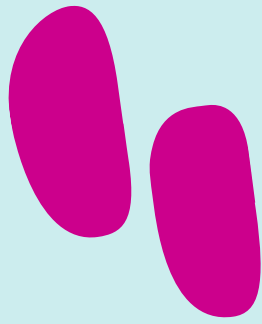
Website: <https://bayo.ubele.org/>

## NILAARI

Nilaari are a BAME-led charity offering culturally proper and sensitive support, including talking therapies, direct support, and support groups. Specific projects target women generally, BAME migrant women specifically, and men with complex needs, including those with a history of offending.

## PRINCES TRUST

Whether you want to work on your confidence, gain essential skills for work or start a business, The Prince's Trust is here to support you. We offer courses, enterprise initiatives, mentoring opportunities, and much more for 16- to 30-year-olds across the UK. Sign up to receive in-person and online support, benefit from one-to-one mentoring, and meet like-minded people. And all for free.



# Academic Life





This section is to help you to understand the distinct roles and responsibilities held on campus which contributes to your academic experience.

## PHD

When studying for a PhD (or Doctor of Philosophy degree) qualification, a postgraduate student will conduct a long piece of research. It will normally take three years to complete full-time, although part-time study alternatives are available. The degree will commonly (though not exclusively) be assessed by a written thesis and an interview, called a viva. PhD students will often be involved in teaching. Ask them about their research!

## Peer Review

Peer review is an important (but not the only) way of assuring the quality of journal articles. When an academic gives a research paper to a journal, the editor of the journal will send the paper to other academics, who will provide feedback on the quality of the paper. The editor will decide whether the paper can be published, or whether the authors need to do more work on the paper. Peer review is usually done for free, depends on good will and takes a long time. Increasingly often, research papers will be given to free online archives as 'preprints,' allowing research to be accessed more quickly, but without the quality checks provided by peer review.

## The Library

You can expect to find all the core texts that you need for your course in the library, as well as useful study spaces. But your university library has many more functions. Through your library's online system, you will be able to access journal articles that you will need during your degree. This means you should never have to use your own money to access paywalled journal articles. These online systems will be slightly different across universities, but you will get introduced to them when you start university. Librarians are often involved in teaching academic skills as well.

[More Information](#)

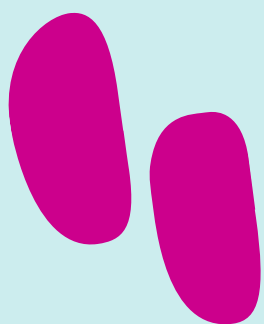
## Journal Article

A journal article is a piece of scholarly work that academics publish in journals. This may be research, discussion papers or other forms of articles. Journal articles are used to give, or share, research.

## Mentoring Pathways

Birkbeck's Mentoring Pathways is a program that connects final-year students with alumni and corporate volunteers who can mentor them. The mentors offer guidance, advice, and support to the students as they plan their future careers and professional development goals.

[More Information](#)



# Teaching and Learning



# Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning is a lot to take in. Not only do you learn something new, but you are also teaching yourself things to put into practice in and out of your studies. This section is to simplify these terms and to grasp a better understanding on different areas that make up your studies.

## MODULE

A discrete 'chunk' or unit of learning with its own learning outcomes and, usually, its own assessment. Most, but not all, courses in the UK are modularised. Where courses are modular, they can form different modules which may vary in size. The size of modules is described as several credits.

## CREDIT SYSTEM

University modules are organised into 'credits' at most universities. This is a system for calculating how each of your modules is weighted, that is, how much they contribute to your overall grade. On full-time courses, you usually study 120 credits in each year with an undergraduate honours degree usually composing of 360 credits in total. Each credit requires a notional 10 hours of study effort, which is divided between direct contact with teaching staff, directed learning, independent study, and assessment. So, a module that has twenty credits will have two hundred hours of study time distributed. How those hours are distributed to different learning tasks will be dependent upon the type of course and learning outcomes for the module.

## ELECTIVES

Elective modules, or electives, are typically optional modules that you decide to enrol in, rather than being a core, mandatory part of your degree. Different courses and universities will have different options. You might need to make choices of optional modules within your course, or you might be able to undertake elective modules from across the university.

## LECTURES

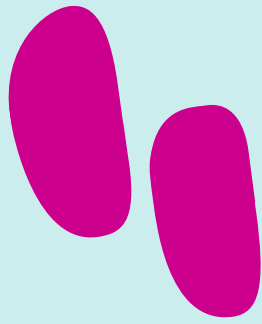
A lecture is a large-group teaching session that is run by a lecturer or member of teaching staff. Lectures are typically taught in lecture theatres or halls, although online delivery became an essential alternative to in-person lectures during the global Covid pandemic. Blended delivery, whereby students can choose to attend lectures on campus or join them remotely from elsewhere, will continue to be offered as an alternative to in-person teaching for some time. During a lecture, you will listen to information and make proper notes as the lecturer is speaking to you. Lectures are often recorded by the university so you can access them after they have been delivered live.

## SEMINARS AND TUTORIALS

Depending on your course, you will have teaching sessions that are not lectures. Small group teaching sessions may be called tutorials, supervision, or seminars. This will vary by context, but you will usually have to prepare some work in advance and be given the opportunity to discuss course material more closely with other students and a teacher.

## PRACTICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

While lectures and seminars are the two most known examples of teaching and learning at university level, it is important to recognise that there are many different and effective ways of teaching and learning in higher education; particularly among practice-based courses. Examples include laboratory-based demonstration and assessment in the sciences, studio work, production and performance in the creative arts, field trips and working and/or studying abroad as part of the study of modern languages.



# Assessment and Feedback



# Assessment and Feedback / 31

## Who Sets and Marks your Assessments?

In universities, assessments are set and marked by the people who teach you. There will be an internal process of moderation, when another member of staff, usually in the same department, will read a sample of the assessments and make sure that they agree with the grades awarded. Grades will remain provisional until the external examiner, who is an academic from a different university, also views students' work and grades. The external examiner's role is to ensure that the marking process is fair and that the marking is to a consistent standard across a cohort, and broadly aligned with how the subject is assessed in other universities. The external examiner does not alter individual student grades.

## Feedback

Feedback is provided on your work by academic staff who mark it. Feedback is usually provided in the form of a mark or grade, and written comments.. It is important to remember that feedback is intended to be objective and constructive, supporting you to achieve your ambitions as a student. It should help you to improve your work for future assignments. You do not have to use your feedback at once. When you receive feedback, think honestly about how you approached the work, what worked well and what you might like to do differently next time. Remember to revisit your feedback before you start a new piece of work. Write an action plan that records what you will do differently next time. Feedback should help you to improve, but you need to engage with it honestly. If you do not understand your feedback or need help to know what you need to do differently, contact the academic who marked the work and ask to discuss it, and for help in improving your results next time.

## How Will My Work Be Graded?

University marking scales vary. Many universities use categorical marking schemes - where your work will be assigned a number. This is simply a way of being able to combine your attainment across modules. So, if you get fifty-eight, that does not mean you have four things wrong compared to a sixty-two. Instead, these numbers relate to different standards/criteria. In other words, work that is graded a sixty-two is a different standard to that of a fifty-eight. These numbers relate to different award classifications. Your tutors will be able to explain the marking scheme in use including how it relates to your final degree classification.

## Grade Boundaries Classification

In the UK, undergraduate degrees are classified - when you complete your whole award, you do not just get a grade (for example, 65), you also get given a classification. The best classification is a First - this is usually for work that is exceptionally good and has a grade of over seventy. The next classification is a 2.1 (two-one). This is the top half of a second-class degree, and usually applies to work that has a grade of 60-70. The next classification is a 2.2 (two-two).

## Mitigation

Mitigation is the process by which a university helps students who have had difficulties during an assessment. For example, if a student needs an extension to the original deadline because they are ill, this is mitigation. Students need to apply for mitigation and provide evidence to support their case.

## SU Support Service

We are here to support you with any academic-related issues you may have and to also offer guidance and support during your time at Birkbeck. BBK Student Union Support is free, impartial, and confidential for current Birkbeck students. We aim to support your interests and gain the best possible outcome for you by helping you make the right choices. The Support Service is here to support you with any academic-related issues you might have. If it will be your first time using the service then please complete the Student Support Consent Form [link here](#) for an advice appointment. We aim to respond to you as soon as possible, but please allow us 3 to 5 working days (Monday to Friday) for a response.

Please [see](#) the Support Service User Agreement for more information.

## How Are Written Assessments Marked?

Assignments are marked according to a marking rubric. This is a document that lists the skills and learning outcomes and specifies what you should do to reach the necessary standards. Work is usually marked holistically - so it is not about how many times you include (for example) a description of a study, but about the quality of that description, and how effectively you use material to support your argument.

## Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is assessment that counts towards your grade. This is the lower half of a second-class degree. The final classification is a third-class degree, for work with a grade between 40-50. Work that has a mark below 40 is a fail. Every university has a slightly different algorithm (or calculation) for combining work across years and modules to produce the final degree classification, but the contribution of each individual piece of work to the final classification will be quite small. At most universities, work completed in your first year does not directly contribute to your final classification. Find out more about degree classifications.

## Referencing

Referencing is an important part of academic writing practice. It is the way by which you let the reader of your work know where your ideas have come from and/or the authors who have influenced your thinking. The precise details of referencing vary across subjects and across universities. You should make sure that you are using the correct format for your work. Checking the required format for your referencing is a useful skill.



## Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is an assessment that does not count towards your grades, but supports your learning, for example by giving you an opportunity to practice and receive feedback on work, which should improve your ability to complete summative assessments.

## Turnitin

Turnitin is software which is used by most universities to check for plagiarism in your work. It checks your work against published books, websites, and other people's work (both within your university and at other universities). It produces a 'similarity score,' which shows how similar your work is to other writing. When the marker reads your written assessment, they will examine the report from Turnitin, and if there are large parts of the work that are the same as other work, you may be investigated for plagiarism. You should check with your own university about their policies for checking work, as these will vary.

## Learning Outcomes

When academics design a module, they will decide what they want you to learn, know or be able to do because of studying the module. This will be described by the learning outcomes. To check that you have achieved the learning outcomes, you will be assessed, and your assessment should relate to the learning outcomes of the module.

## Marking Rubric

A rubric describes what you need to do to achieve different marks on an assessment. There will usually be various aspects of the rubric, relating to different programme or module outcomes. You should be given the rubric in advance of completing an assessment - it helps communicate the expectations around the assessment. You may receive feedback that is based around the rubric which will describe how well you are achieving the learning outcomes. The rubric may be provided separately, or it might be included in a course handbook or similar document.

## Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is a growing problem in higher education. It takes a wide variety of forms including the use of essay and degree mills, plagiarism, collusion between students, and forged or altered qualification certificates.

## Plagiarism

This is where a student uses other people's work and presents it as their own. Universities often use software to detect plagiarism, where your work is compared to other students' work and with pages on the internet. Plagiarism is a serious offence that can result in students being expelled from university.

## AI Plagiarism

Can AI be used to help you with your exams or coursework?

The general answer is NO! Some courses allow certain AI to be used but check with your department before the exam or assessment.

If you are unsure about using a form of AI, please refer to the Guidance for Students in the Appendix on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and academic integrity (part of Birkbeck's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy). Students should read these policies carefully and speak to their tutors before using AI-powered tools to complete an assessment. Please note, that Birkbeck has opted to use Turnitin's AI writing detection tool which will highlight any passages in an assessment produced by AI-powered tools, although this alone cannot be used as evidence of academic misconduct.

It is fine to use some forms of AI, especially in the preparatory stages of your work.

### **Examples include:**

- Supporting language translation (e.g., translating a word using Google Translate)
- Checking or highlighting spelling and grammatical errors (e.g., using Microsoft Word's individual grammar suggestions).
- Support in understanding a difficult piece of writing by summarising the main points or extracting key findings.

Using AI software such as ChatGPT to create your assessments and present these as your own is cheating. This is an assessment offence and against the College's academic misconduct policy.

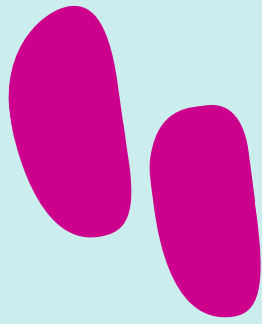
AI software cannot be used to avoid the process of critical thinking and learning.

AI software cannot be used to complete assessed work that demands your original thinking and creativity.

### **Key sources of information**

- Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy
- Appendix on Artificial Intelligence (see guidance for students in points (9) to 14)

If you stay unclear, please speak to a tutor before using AI-powered tools to complete an assessment.



# Good Study Behaviour



# Good Study Behaviours

## What Does it Mean to Study Independently?

In-class learning, such as time spent in seminars or lectures, is only part of the learning that you will do at university. You will also have to undertake lots of independent study. The type of independent work that you will need to do will differ during the semester but might involve note taking, reading, completing coursework, or preparing for exams. It might help to think of studying as a bit like a full-time job in that you should spend about 40 hours a week completing work. You can ask your personal tutor for guidance about how best to spend your independent study time.



## Note Taking

In lectures, you should take summary notes. You cannot write down everything the lecturer says, and nor should you. The purpose of a lecture is to introduce you to a topic. Following a lecture, you should write a summary of your understanding, highlighting key concepts and information, and noting things you do not understand. You should then complete set reading, noticing, and improving your understanding. Notes will not always be useful as revision - sometimes just the act of writing itself is useful for helping you to sort out your thinking. Make sure that everything you write is in your own words - never copy from another source even in your own notes. This is to create good habits and avoid plagiarism.



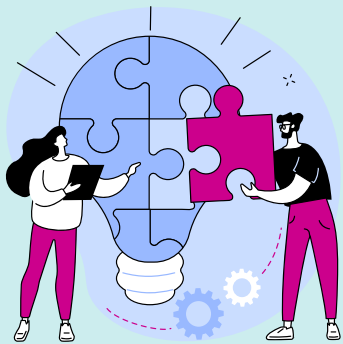
## Reading

Your lecturers will expect you to read between lectures. How much and what type of reading will depend upon your subject. Some reading will be for general background and some you will have to study in more detail. When you start reading, try and think about why you are reading that piece, as that will decide what you are looking for, and therefore what sort of notes you will need to make. Sometimes reading will help you to develop your own writing style, sometimes you will be looking for specific details. Avoid mindlessly reading material simply because you have been told to.



# Reflection

Reflection is the act of thoughtfully revisiting things to ‘make sense’ of them. You may, for example, be asked to write a reflective commentary on how you have approached an essay. This would involve describing your process, but then considering what worked well and whether this process could be improved, and how.



# Critical Thinking

Questioning is one of the most important skills to buy on your university journey, to prove critical thinking. Critical thinking involves appreciating what sources are telling you, and how they support or undermine the story or argument you are making within a piece of work. Critical thinking is not pointing out what is wrong with something. It is also not a disconnected set of observations about something. To be critical is to be able to appreciate strengths as well as weaknesses, and to see how a source fits into the bigger story. This is a difficult skill to buy and will take some practice.

# Academic Writing

It is hard learning to write well, and we all (lecturers included) go through the write, rewrite, edit, proofread, give process. Even successful professors have journal articles rejected in peer review. Academic writing is formal and usually subject specific. You can improve your writing by doing lots of reading and considering within the reading not just the content but also the structure of the paragraph, the way that authors make points and construct their work. But remember that not all published work is necessarily good.



# What to do if you Do not Understand Something

Ask! No question is a stupid question. Ask a peer, tutor, librarian, Google. Far from being a sign of weakness or incompetence, asking for help is usually the sign of a good student. It means you can recognise your own weaknesses, find who to approach for help, and are engaged enough to want to work at improving your skills without prompting.

# Study Skills

If you need more information follow up on <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/learning-development> for this! This section will provide the importance and promotion of study skills we offer to you!

We offer online and face-to-face advice, guidance, and support to help all Birkbeck students develop the study skills they need for academic success at university. This includes:

- Study skills resources, including interactive guides, videos, and recordings of past workshops in the Study Skills Moodle module.
- Live study skills workshops which are offered multiple times a week during term time. There are many different topics, they are always free, and you can attend as many as you wish.
- Specialist, subject-based help via our Learning Development Tutors and resources.
- Access to personalised writing feedback and online tutoring via Studiosity in My Birkbeck.



# Contact Us

If you would like further information or advice about study skills, please contact the Student Advice Service or raise a query on Birkbeck's 'Ask' system.

If you would like further information or advice about subject-specific study skills or library services, please contact our dedicated subject-specific tutors.

Study skills are not personal qualities that students either do or do not have; they are a skillset that can be learned and refined, and the fundamentals can be learned easily and quickly. Engagement with our training and resources will help develop your existing abilities and serves as part of your lifelong continuing professional and personal development, offering you the best chances of success in your university studies.

Our workshops and resources cover a wide range of academic practice such as high-level reading and research skills, critical and independent thinking, authoring essays, assignments and dissertations, and citation and referencing. We cater for all levels of study and academic experience, from foundation to PhD, from experienced students to those coming back to university after a long time, or for the first time.

Birkbeck offers study skills workshops to equip you with the skills and support you need to progress through your course. You will be able to sign up for these once you have completed your programme enrolment. Current students can sign up in My Birkbeck.



# Learning Development Services

The cross-College learning development team offers live online workshops, digital resources, and one-to-one appointments, all designed to help you succeed in your studies.

Example topics from our varied list of live online workshops include:

- Procrastination, perfectionism, and prioritisation
- Dissertation writing boot camp.
- Essay and assignment writing
- How to develop your concentration and focus
- Zotero (reference management software)
- Exam revision





# Advice in your Department

Our schools offer a comprehensive range of study skills workshops, digital resources, and one-to-one help. Studiosity is an online service for all Birkbeck undergraduate and postgraduate students on taught programmes. It gives you assignment feedback and access to live online tutorials. Studiosity is completely free and always available. You can use the service up to six times if you study part-time, and eight times if you study full-time, in each academic year. It can be used for either writing feedback or live online tutorials, or a combination of both. Last academic year, Birkbeck students used Studiosity over 8500 times and 94% rated it four out of five or better.



## What Studiosity Provides

Writing feedback on assignments before you give them, provided within 24 hours by a specialist in academic writing - focusing on key elements such as structure, language, grammar, and punctuation. The feedback does not cover subject-level content but will help you get your assignment into shape so your ideas can shine through. You can give a sample of your writing up to 8,000 words.

30-minute online tutorials (Connect Live) where you will work through an academic problem with a tutor until you figure it out. Subjects' areas covered are:

- English language issues
- maths, biology, chemistry, physics, economics, and business studies (all at foundational level)
- basic, first-year undergraduate statistics, economics, and accounting
- Connect Live tutors will also help you with academic referencing if you can tell them what style your lecturer would like you to use.
- Studiosity helps with academic writing and problem solving. It is not a proofreading service nor a substitute for attending online learning activities and making the most of the support offered by academic, learning development and administrative staff.



## How to Use Studiosity

You can access the service by selecting the 'Studiosity' link in My Birkbeck. You can also download the Studiosity app on Google Play or Apple App Store. Studiosity is part of a whole package of study skills development at Birkbeck and is best used in conjunction with all our other study skills help.

## What Studiosity Will Not Do

Studiosity cannot comment on the content, or subject matter, of your writing:

Studiosity feedback is provided by academically qualified staff, but not necessarily specialists in your subject area. In contrast, your lecturers at Birkbeck are research-intensive and often international experts in their field, so they are best placed to comment on your subject matter.

Whatever you do - make sure you use it! You cannot carry over an allocation of Studiosity to next year - it resets at the beginning of each year.

# How to Make the Most of Writing Feedback



Start using Studiosity for your first assignment onwards so you can incorporate the feedback when you are preparing future assignments. Consider how many assignments you will have across the term. If you have three essays to write, for example, you want to use a Studiosity interaction to get feedback on each one. Usually, you should only give an assignment draft once to Studiosity. If lots of errors are highlighted, and you do not have many other assignments over the course of the year, then you might want to edit the document to incorporate the feedback and then resubmit it to Studiosity. This is comparatively rare though. Please note: We are unable to offer you any more interactions once you have used up your allocation.

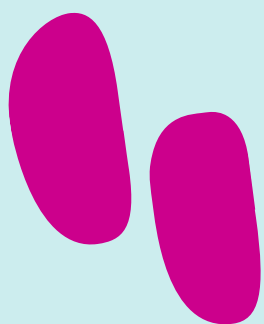
Studiosity will highlight an error the first or second time it occurs but thereafter will expect you to go through the document and correct any further errors yourself. Therefore, you will get the most feedback on the earlier part of the document. Studiosity promises to return writing feedback within 24 hours. So, try to upload a draft of your assignment at least 30 hours before your deadline so you can implement the valuable advice and feedback you will receive.

# How to Make the Most of Connect Live

You will receive the transcript of your session so use this to feed into your learning development, but do not rely on that alone to help you in future. If you were aided to work through a tricky maths problem, find other examples of the same type of problem so you can practise. If you have requested some help on an academic referencing problem, make notes about the solution in your own words. Although the advice in the transcript might be readily understandable after your Connect Live session, the take-home messages might not be so clear after the passage of time.

You will be able to access your Writing Feedback reports and transcripts of Connect Live sessions throughout the academic year, so these will be an ongoing source of reference and support. After each Connect Live or Writing Feedback interaction, figure out what you can take forward for your future academic work and jot down some notes.





**Learning will  
not always be  
comfortable**



# Learning Is not Always Going to be Comfortable

Overall, your degree will be a fun and inspiring learning experience. But sometimes learning will feel difficult and you are not necessarily going to enjoy every aspect of your degree. That is okay and is a completely normal part of the learning process. Learning has a complex relationship with emotion. Sometimes the parts of your course which you find most difficult can also be the most rewarding and you will feel immensely proud to have succeeded. Learning is a skill that you can practice and get better at. It is also a skill for life, which can help you in your future career and wider activities.





**SU** BAME  
STUDENTS'  
NETWORK



# BAME SUPPORT

**GUIDE**



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[studentsunion@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:studentsunion@bbk.ac.uk)



020-7631-6335



[www.birkbeckunion.org/](http://www.birkbeckunion.org/)



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