

Guide to Student Support

The National Centre for Circus Arts is a large and lively community of staff, students, circus professionals and users from many different cultural and educational backgrounds. Adapting to university life or to a new environment can at times be challenging. There are resources available if you have questions or encounter difficulties; this guide is intended to guide you to the right people or sources of information.

Please take time to read this section of the handbook, refer to it whenever needed, and make use of the support available to you. Do not hesitate to utilise these resources, even if you think it is a relatively minor issue.

Student Support on the Higher Education Course at the National Centre covers a variety of areas such as support for disabled students, academic support, student finance and health and welfare.

Support for Students with Disabilities including Specific Learning Difficulties

At the National Centre for Circus Arts, we are committed to making sure all students have the support they need to thrive. Many students access support during their time with us, and we encourage you to speak to us early if you think it might help.

If you have a disability or specific learning difference, the Student Support Manager is your first point of contact. You can get in touch via Teams to talk through what support might be appropriate for you.

If you are a UK student with a disability, including Specific Learning Difficulties or a long-term mental health condition, you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). DSA can fund specialist equipment and support for your studies, such as assistive software or study skills tuition. It is not a loan and does not need to be repaid.

You apply for DSA through your awarding body, for example Student Finance England. As part of the process, you will need to provide evidence of your disability or impairment. This is usually medical evidence from a GP or documentation from an Educational Psychologist. If you need an Educational Psychology assessment, we can help arrange this once you have started your course.

If you would like to discuss support options, the Support Through Studies policy, or how to apply for DSA, please contact the Student Support Manager via Teams chat or email at

antigone@nationalcircus.org.uk.

Personal Academic Support

Various staff here at the National Centre can help in different ways if you need academic support. If you need help with the content of modules or assessment work, in the first instance you can speak directly to the teacher of that module. You can also seek support from the Student Support Manager or another member of the degree team.

If you require support for essays and academic work, please see the Student Support Manager who can arrange additional support for you.

The Academic Administration Manager, Student Support Manager, or the Head of Higher Education can all offer overall guidance or advice about the course or your marks.

Counselling and Student Mental Health Support

The National Centre for Circus Arts recognises that starting Higher Education can feel both exciting and overwhelming. Conservatoire-style training is intensive and can place real demands on your physical energy, emotional resilience and overall wellbeing.

We see mental health as just as important as physical health. If you are struggling, we encourage you to seek support early and to speak to the Student Support Manager or another member of the HE team as soon as possible. Our aim is to create an environment where you can train safely, grow as an artist, and look after yourself while you do it.

The National Centre for Circus Arts provides access to counselling and mental health support for students through a number of routes.

All enrolled students can register with **Vivup's counselling service**, which offers access to a 24-hour helpline and up to six free counselling or therapy sessions per issue.

The National Centre may also fund up to six counselling sessions through our online counselling provider, **Problem Shared**. Access to this service is based on assessed need. Referrals are made following an initial screening process, which typically includes recognised assessment tools such as:

- The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) for depression
- The Generalised Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7) for anxiety

These tools help identify the level of support required and guide appropriate intervention.

If further sessions are needed beyond the initial funded six, students may choose to self-fund additional sessions. In some cases, the counsellor may recommend that the National Centre review the need for continued financial support.

Students can arrange counselling support by contacting the Student Support Manager.

Financial Assistance

The Hardship Fund is provided by the Leverhulme Trust and is available to students in cases of severe financial need. Applications can be made throughout the academic year through the Hardship Fund form available on Teams. Applicants must be able to demonstrate severe financial difficulties unconnected with tuition fee requirements.

The Equipment Loan Scheme Many students wish to own the equipment for their circus discipline. The National Centre for Circus Arts recognises that this equipment can be expensive and can greatly vary in price. In order for all students to access the correct equipment we will support their purchase through a loan and repayment system.

Following approval by the Higher Education team, the student will request an invoice addressed to the National Centre for Circus Arts and the National Centre will purchase and receive the equipment on behalf of the student. In this case the student would have to agree and sign an equipment repayment contract (this must also be agreed and signed by the Head of Finance).

Whilst the student will be able to use the equipment while they are paying back the loan, the equipment will remain the property of the National Centre until the loan has been fully repaid. Repayment must be made within the Academic year that the purchase is made.

Please note, students should never purchase a piece of equipment in the hope of having access to the scheme without having received confirmation to proceed from the Higher Education team.

Learner Support

Support for students whose first language is not English

The Higher Education team can provide help and support with any student who requires it around academic reading, writing or literary study. Please contact the Student Support Manager for more information or to book a support session.

Learning Support Agreements for students with disabilities/specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia)

All students who identify as having a disability will be invited to meet the Student Support Manager and to confirm a Learning Support Agreement (LSA) This is a written agreement between the student and the school which describes the type of support which is required and the way in which it will be provided. It is a practical and positive way of informing those teaching and working with students. With the student's permission, copies are circulated to the members of staff named on the agreement. There will be termly appointments to review this plan and make adjustments if needed.

Other Individual Support Arrangements

Occasionally the School may suggest a specific learning arrangement for an individual student; in this circumstance it is likely the student will be offered a Support through Study Plan. It would set out a series of arrangements developed to ensure that the student's particular needs are supported in his or her circumstances. It may be used in cases of injury, illness, or at times of personal difficulty.

In all cases, the Academic Administration Manager and Student Support Manager, or relevant Higher Education team member will meet with the student to draw up the Support Through Study Plan. With the student's permission, relevant members of staff will be informed of the decisions made at this meeting, so that the relevant adjustments may be made.

Injury Management

The Higher Education team will support you through any injury which affects you during your enrolment period. At the National Centre for Circus Arts, we aim to prioritise injury prevention and education over a clinical treatment service for injuries.

Students in the first year have group sessions on anatomy and physiology and additionally with their discipline group. These sessions are to improve education on physicality and body awareness alongside giving them tools to help them with minor injuries such as sprains and tightness. In conjunction with these sessions discipline teachers and Higher Education staff will also be able to support the process of learning with respect to body awareness and physicality specific to injury management and will be actively involved in tailoring individual student needs.

Physiotherapy

As physio treatment is at times required in order to allow a student to progress with their training, the National Centre has established a relationship with external Physiotherapist providers. Physiotherapy at the National Centre is limited; it is therefore crucial that students put their own self-care at the center of their learning.

Where students that suffer head, neck, injuries or dislocations and severe sprains, the National Centre will require the student to go to A&E without question.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they attend any physio appointments booked for them – if they miss an appointment without evidence of significant circumstances which prevented them from attending, a student will need to pay for any alternative appointment.

Health Insurance

Due to the nature of the timescale involved in obtaining treatments and further investigation (x-rays, scans etc) on the National Health Service (NHS), the National Centre highly recommends that all students take out private medical insurance. The referral period under the NHS can be an extremely slow process, which ultimately hinders recovery and the return to full fitness/training. The procurement of this insurance is the responsibility of the student.

Accident Procedure

Should your injury be a result of an accident at the National Centre, you must inform a member of staff who will take the appropriate action, including contacting the duty First Aider to attend.

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