

# The Disability Tax

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## Introduction

The Disability Tax in short is the extra costs incurred, literally physically or mentally to attend university or work to the same rate as an able bodied person, in my research I explore the effect of this 'Disability tax' from my own experience on social and educational exclusion in the context of disabled students at University College London ("UCL") and their ability to access education. I include a review of the relevant legislation, guidance, policy, and theory to explore how a reframing of the viewpoint away from 'conditional' inclusion for disabled persons could improve implementation for UCL and the local government (Camden Borough Council).

“It is the duty of the authority to take such steps as it is *reasonable*”

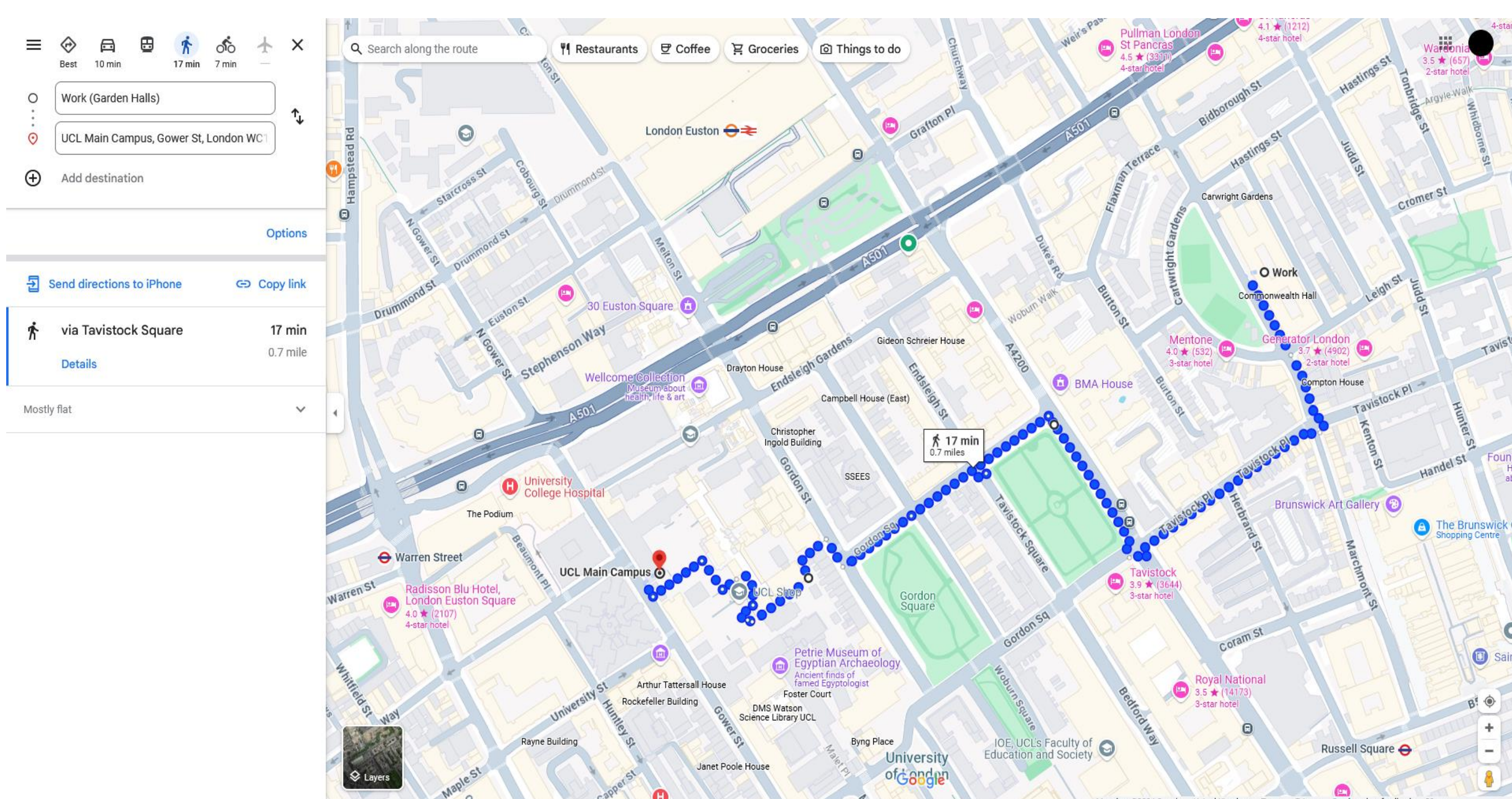
[To stop discrimination against disabled people in carrying out of functions]

(Disability Discrimination Act 1995)

## Policy

Much of my research was spend studying disability discrimination policy for the legislative level to university and council guidelines, the quote across is from the main piece of government legislation the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

- This particular quote highlights that current disability policy even when enforced is always conditional against an organisations nebulous standard of 'reasonableness'
- This legislation allows for many loopholes in the practice of lower-level guidance
- E.g. The London development plan states that when considering historic areas *such as the UCL campus accessibility must be considered from the beginning* however this is not often the case.



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## Theory

The concept of relational space is of great help when thinking about a 'disability tax'

Above is my personal 1<sup>st</sup> year walk from halls to University it is only roughly 15 minutes and to an able bodied person it would be short enough to go back and forth multiple times a day for lunch, with a disability this was not possible, the unreliability of public transport and high cost of private transport means commuting is often out of the question for disabled students but with an off campus halls and rare pavement side benches disabled students must pay the extra 'tax' of halls cost to gain an experience that parallels one of an abled commuter. An extra cost for the same relation between home and work.

## Bibliography

The Disability Discrimination Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents>

The London Plan on Disability: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/the-london-plan-2021-online/chapter-3-design#policy-d5-inclusive-design-169528-title>

The graduation ceremony: <https://cheesegratermagazine.org/2024/09/05/access-denied-ucl-fails-disabled-student-on-graduation-day/>

Relational Geographies: Hall, E., & Wilton, R. (2017). Towards a relational geography of disability. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(6), 727-744.



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**Royal Festival Hall** where during a recent UCL graduation ceremony a disabled graduate was unable to cross the floor due to there being no ramp up on to the stage, he was forced to be given his degree on the floor. Legally *reasonable*? Maybe but a mental slap in the face and a stark reminder of the conditional tax of disabled student inclusion