

## Blind or Vision Impaired Fact Sheet

### What does 'blind' or 'vision impaired' mean?

- A person who is blind or vision impaired is unable to see well, even with the use of glasses or contact lenses.
- Most people who are blind or vision impaired have some degree of sight and the effects of vision impairment can vary greatly.
- [Visual disabilities](#) can include someone only having peripheral vision, blurred vision, light sensitivity, glare sensitivity, contrast sensitivity and light/dark adaptation.

### How is a student's college experience impacted by being blind or vision impaired?

Difficulty	Possible impact in college
Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties <b>seeing print, presentation slides and whiteboards.</b></li> <li>• Difficulty <b>keeping up with lectures</b> that use large quantities of visual content.</li> <li>• Difficulty, or inability, with <b>notetaking during classes/lectures.</b></li> <li>• <b>Completing academic tasks</b> may take significantly longer, particularly if students need to <b>spend extra time converting materials into accessible formats.</b></li> <li>• Difficulty with <b>navigation and orientation around campus</b> and placement sites.</li> <li>• Students may have difficulty with <b>the last minutes changes to lecture times/locations</b> if they have not been given adequate notice.</li> </ul>
Managing Assistive Technology (AT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of students who are blind or vision impaired, <b>learning to use new AT can initially take extra time.</b></li> <li>• Types of AT which students may use include a <b>screen magnifier, screen reading software, voice recognition software etc.</b></li> <li>• Using AT <b>may slow the student's speed of work</b> such as not being able to read for long periods of time, making it more difficult to complete assignments and exams.</li> </ul>
Other difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing the use of a <b>personal assistant or guide dog</b> if this is required.</li> <li>• Students who have been <b>recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties</b> and/or difficulties with practical tasks.</li> </ul>

## How can you support a student who is blind or vision impaired?

### 1. Student-Centred Approach:

- If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
- Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
- Implement any [classroom](#) and [exam](#) accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment**.

### 2. Teaching and Learning:

- **Design course material so that they can be produced in an accessible format** on request. Following the [Guidelines for Accessible Documents](#), which provides guidelines for Word, PDF, websites and PowerPoint slides.
  - **Microsoft Word files can be easily manipulated** by the student into a format that suits them.
- Be guided by [Universal Design principles](#) when designing coursework.
- **Provide lecture notes, in a suitable format, in advance of the class.**
- Read PowerPoint **slides aloud** and **describe any diagrams or visual aids**.
- **Provide reading lists in advance and assistance with prioritising readings** for students who require an alternative format such as Braille or e-book. The production of texts in alternative formats is time consuming and costly.
- **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
- Consider the student's needs when **planning field trips or other activities**.
- Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require a computer/assistive technology/scribe?).
- Support the student if they have **difficulties meeting deadlines**.

### 3. Communication:

- **Face the class when presenting** and ensure all material presented on slides/whiteboard is **communicated verbally**.
- Some students who are blind or visually impaired may not recognise your voice, hence it can be **helpful to say your name when you greet the student**.
- **Guide dogs are at work and hence should not be disturbed**. Become familiar with the [UCD Animals on Campus Policy](#).
- **Always ask the student if they require assistance** before doing so.

To find out more, please visit:

[Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#)