

# **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.
- <u>Visual disabilities</u> can include someone only have 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 | • Difficulties seeing print, presentation slides and whiteboards.                                  |
| and learning material &   | <ul> <li>Difficulty keeping up with lectures that use large quantities of</li> </ul>               |
| environment               | visual content.  |
|                           | • Difficulty, or inability, with <b>notetaking during classes/lectures</b> .                       |
|                           | <ul> <li>Completing academic tasks may take significantly longer,</li> </ul>                       |
|                           | particularly if students need to <b>spend extra time converting</b>                                |
|                           | materials into accessible formats.   |
|                           | <ul> <li>Difficulty with navigation and orientation around campus and</li> </ul>                   |
|                           | placement sites.   |
|                           | • Students may have difficulty with last minutes changes to lecture                                |
|                           | times/locations if they have not been given adequate notice.                                       |
| Managing Assistive        | Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of  |
| Technology (AT)           | students who are blind or vision impaired, learning to use new AT                                  |
|                           | can initially take extra time.   |
|                           | <ul> <li>Types of AT which students may use include a screen magnifier,</li> </ul>                 |
|                           | screen reading software, voice recognition software etc.   |
|                           | • Using AT may slow the student's speed of work such as not being                                  |
|                           | able to read for long periods of time, making it more difficult to                                 |
|                           | complete assignments and exams.  |
| Other difficulties        | <ul> <li>Managing the use of a personal assistant or guide dog if this is<br/>required.</li> </ul> |
|                           | <ul> <li>Students who have been recently diagnosed may experience</li> </ul>                       |
|                           | emotional difficulties and/or difficulties with practical tasks.                                   |

To find out more, please visit:

- https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching
- www.ncbi.ie







#### 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 <u>classroom</u> and <u>exam</u> 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 <u>Guidelines for Accessible Documents</u>, 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 <u>Universal Design principles</u> 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 <u>time consuming and costly</u>.
- 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 presenting 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 <u>UCD Animals on Campus Policy</u>.
  - Always ask the student if they require assistance before doing do.



