**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 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?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Possible impact in College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment | • Difficulties seeing print, presentation slides and whiteboards.  
   • Difficulty keeping up with lectures that use large quantities of visual content.  
   • Difficulty, or inability, with notetaking during classes/lectures.  
   • Completing academic tasks may take significantly longer, particularly if students need to spend extra time converting materials into accessible formats.  
   • Difficulty with navigation and orientation around campus and placement sites.  
   • Students may have difficulty with last minutes changes to lecture times/locations if they have not been given adequate notice. |
| Managing Assistive Technology (AT)              | • Although AT has significantly enhanced the participation of students who are blind or vision impaired, learning to use new AT can initially take extra time.  
   • Types of AT which students may use include a screen magnifier, 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                               | • Managing the use of a personal assistant or guide dog if this is required.  
   • Students who have been recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties and/or difficulties with practical tasks. |

To find out more, please visit:
- [https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching](https://www.ahead.ie/inclusiveteaching)
- [www.ncbi.ie](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 **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 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 [UCD Animals on Campus Policy](#).
   - **Always ask the student if they require assistance** before doing do.