



## Vision impairment

### ***Key Support Actions***

- Make directed reading lists available in advance, to enable the student to access and organise the materials as needed
- Keep timetables and venues consistent so that the student can easily find their way and any support workers will be able to attend as agreed
- Instigate strong ground rules to ensure everyone can participate in discussions even if they are unable to see visual cues
- Describe all visual material, and anything written on a board
- Give written feedback in typed format

### ***What is a vision impairment?***

Vision impairment is the term used to describe a loss of sight that cannot be corrected using glasses or contact lenses. There are two main categories of vision impairment:

1. Registered sight impaired, which means partially sighted.
2. Registered severely sight impaired, which means legally blind. A consultant ophthalmologist is responsible for registering an individual as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

Students with vision impairments will experience varying degrees of sight loss; the majority will have some useful vision. For many, the vision impairment will not be obvious to others, even when someone is registered as legally blind.

### ***How does having a vision impairment impact on study?***

Support required will vary depending on the student's individual circumstances. However, students with vision impairments may need support in the following areas:

- Finding, organising, transcribing, and reading materials (reading speed may be slower than their peers, even when transcribed)
- Negotiating areas with inflexible lighting
- Participating in practical activities such as field work
- Note taking, from boards or presentations, or in a darkened room
- Orientation, travel and route finding on campus

## ***Inclusive Teaching***

Many principles of Inclusive Teaching are beneficial for students with vision impairments.

- If, during a lecture or class, new information is written on the board, an oral explanation should be given at the same time
- Provision of directed reading lists in advance to enable materials to be obtained in an accessible format
- Provision of lecture and supervision handouts in advance in an accessible format, according to individual requirements
- All information and all relevant materials should be provided in an accessible format, according to individual requirements
- Extended library loans
- Permission to record lectures
- Reserved seating in lectures to ensure the student can sit close to the board
- Ground rules should be established for group work as it may be difficult for the student to interact and see from body language when it might be their turn to contribute

## ***Reasonable Adjustments***

- Regular meetings with tutors and Academic mentor and Disability Adviser should be coordinated to review adjustments and ensure that a student's support requirements are being met
- 24 hours' notice of change of venue whenever possible, given via an accessible format. This is to ensure the student can find the venue and arrange human support if necessary
- Rest breaks may be needed due to eye strain and fatigue. On occasion, extended deadlines may also be required

### **Human Support**

Students who have a vision impairment may use a range of human support. This support (often known as Non-Medical Help) is funded through Disabled Students' Allowances for UK students, but international students are funded by DMHS.

### **Technological Support**

There is a variety of assistive technology, including numerous software packages and forms of equipment, designed to help students with vision impairments study effectively.

## ***The legal position***

If a consultant ophthalmologist has registered an individual as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, then they will automatically meet the definition of a disabled person under the Equality Act (2010). In such cases, there will be a legal obligation for the University to make reasonable adjustments and not treat the individual less favourably for reasons relating to their impairment.

*This guide has been produced for LSE by the Disability and Mental Health Service, with credit to the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre at University of Cambridge who kindly permitted use of their staff guides in production of our own.*