# **Studying at LSE: A guide for students with a visual impairment**



Who is this guide for?

This guide is for all LSE students who are visually impaired. The aim of the guide is to provide practical information about where to find support within the School, as well as some study tips, and things to consider whilst undertaking your degree with us.

Visual impairment is the term used to describe sight that cannot be corrected using glasses or contact lenses.

There are various terms to describe having little or no sight, probably the most common being ‘visual impairment’. Two categories of visual impairment are formally recognised through the UK registration process. Sight impaired (sometimes known as partially sighted). Severely sight impaired (also known as blind).

What do you need?

Support required will vary depending on your individual circumstances. However, as necessary we can arrange for support in areas such as:

* Navigating the library and accessing printed material
* Negotiating and utilising areas with inflexible lighting
* Notetaking
* Orientation, travel, and route finding around the LSE campus and halls of residence

Support and adjustments like these examples are coordinated by the Disability and Wellbeing Service (DWS), and we would encourage you to contact our service as soon as you know you will, or may, be studying here.

It is really worth thinking about what reasonable adjustments you need before coming to DWS. Start by thinking about what adjustments you had during your last experience of studying.

If you have not yet started your course, find out as much as you can about how it will be taught in order to identify what support you might need e.g. how might lectures and seminars differ to tutorials.

Think carefully about the logistics of your course: how many teaching sessions will you have in a week? How long is your journey to get to campus? Will you have to travel in rush-hour?

By finding out as much information as possible beforehand it will be easier to foresee potential difficulties, and help you plan.

If you need any assistance with daily living tasks such as meal preparation, shopping etc. you will be responsible for making your own arrangements. If you are a UK student you should contact your local Social Services Department to request a community assessment to discuss a suitable care package.

If you are an international student, you should contact local UK based personal care agencies before starting at the School, so that you can discuss your personal requirements and related costs. Please make these arrangements well before you join so that everything runs smoothly, and to ensure you have the right support and funds in place for when you start your studies.

Through DWS we can create an Inclusion Plan (IP) so that your individual circumstances can be explained to those teaching you, allowing them to make adjustments and offer some flexibility where required. IPs are created in collaboration with you, and can contain as much or as little detail as you wish - their main purpose is to set-out what support and adjustments your teaching department need to offer you, for example ensuring that print and other visual materials are provided in your preferred format.

You can find full details on how to access our service on the [Disability and Wellbeing Service Webpage](https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/student-services/disability-and-wellbeing-service).

UK students are also encouraged to apply for [Disabled Students’ Allowances](https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas) at the earliest opportunity.

Study tips

It is important to be realistic about your workload, and to plan and organise your studies accordingly. If you have difficulty reading print quickly and/or for long periods, you need to ensure than you pace yourself and give yourself enough time to complete your research.

If you have some useable vision, limit your screen time and take regular breaks. Allow sufficient time for your eyes to rest. If you are struggling to keep up with the reading, do not be afraid to speak with your course tutor or disability adviser.

You should always aim to work towards the deadlines set by your course tutor. However, if you believe you will need more time to complete your assignment, discuss it with your tutor as early as you can so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Sometimes these may be unavoidable, but try to avoid requesting too many extensions for assignment deadlines as the work will build-up!

Where you work can really impact how you work. Organise your workspace so you are comfortable, have enough space and minimal distractions.

Organise your material so that you can find what you need when you need it. Work out a storage system so you are able to easily refer back to materials you may need for revision, essays etc. If you struggle with doing this yourself, a study buddy can help – you can speak to your disability adviser for further details.

Assistive technology

**You may well already be familiar with and using assistive technology for your studies and/or daily life, though even if you are used to using assistive technology, you might find the following websites of interest:**

* [Vital Tech](https://www.vitaltech.org.uk/) is a guide through the world of assistive tech for blind and partially sighted people in the UK. Vital Tech is funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust to provide advice and promote the adoption of accessible technology.
* [Ability Net](https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/) provide a step by step guide to the individual adjustments you can make to your computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone to make it easier to use.
* LSE have an accessibility app which is useful for navigation around the campus and provides details of accessibility. It is provided by DisabledGo. Just search your app store for ‘LSE accessibility’.
* You can find out more information about [LSE Assistive technologies support](https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/dts/services/assistive)
* UK students can apply for DSA support which can fund specialist equipment and international students can apply for funding from DWS.

External sources of support/resources

* [Thomas Polkington Trust](https://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/Pages/Category/student-support) provide information and an advice hub designed to support students with vision impairment living in England. Their aim is to facilitate and enable students from across the country to network and provide peer support on anything related to Further or Higher Education.
* [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/)is the leading charity of its kind in the UK, run by and for people with experience of disability or health conditions. They have a number ofuseful [education related factsheets](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets) as well as a [Disabled Students Helpline](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/helplines/disabled-students-helpline) that provides advice to disabled students who are studying in England.
* [Metro Blind Sport](https://www.metroblindsport.org/) is a London based charity. Its aim is to open doors to sport for all vision impaired people, regardless of age or sporting ability.
* LOOK have a [mentoring scheme](https://www.look-uk.org/mentoring/) that you may be interested in
* [VICTA](https://www.victa.org.uk/) are a UK charity that support VI students. They provide activities, services and grant programmes
* [RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/starting-university) provide advice about starting university, including a helpful factsheet for International students. ['Information for blind or partially sighted international students'](https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/International_students_guide.doc).
* You may be eligible for a [Disabled Persons Freedom Pass](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/freedom-pass/disabled-persons-freedom-pass). The travel pass allows free travel across London and free bus journeys nationally