

Supporting Students with Vision Loss

Vision loss ranges from total blindness to partial or low vision that cannot be corrected fully with lenses. A broad range of conditions result in various degrees and types of vision loss.

Vision loss includes difficulties with:

- { Depth and distance perception
- { Restricted field of vision
- { Maneuvering through areas with unusual spatial configurations
- { Reading and recognizing signs and instructions
- { Writing
- { Seeing colours and contrast
- { Night vision

Because of the nature of visual disabilities, not all individuals make use of a cane, wear glasses, or are accompanied by a guide dog. Some students will have lived with the disability all their lives and can be very independent, while others will have developed the disability later in life and are still adjusting to the changes.

Assistive Devices

A student with vision loss may use devices for reading, writing exams, taking notes and navigating. These include:

- { Monocular, binocular
- { Digital recorders
- { Portable Braille note-taking and video magnification devices
- { Computer-based screen readers and text magnifiers

Best Practices

In Your Classroom

- x Adopt Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies. UDL benefits all students and promotes a respectful classroom climate with: clear expectations and feedback; a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge; natural learning supports; multimodal teaching methods; and technology to enhance learning
- { Provide course materials (reading lists, notes, compact discs etc) as early as possible to allow time if conversion to accessible audio format
- { Provide preferential seating close to the front of the classroom.
- {

- { Ensure your video and multimedia clips have descriptive captions. The Learning (CETL) team can help instructors make course content accessible.
- { Students make extensive use of adaptive technology and will likely need to use a smartphone and a laptop in class.

In Labs

- { Tour the lab with the student, making sure they know where safety equipment is and related procedures.
- { Keep aisles and emergency exits clear.
- { Arrange lab equipment so it is easily accessible.
- { Using large print and braille, label all equipment.

- { Feel free to offer a handshake to students who use canes or service dogs, but let them know that you are about to do so.
- { Be aware that students with tunnel vision may step back or reposition an object in order to see it more clearly.

Guiding Students who have Vision Loss

- { Ask students if they would like assistance.
- { Offer your arm; do not take theirs.
- { Walk at their pace but a half step ahead.
- { Pause at stairs or curbs to warn that a change is coming.
- { Ask if you should describe major obstacles or changes in the route.
- { If the student has a service dog, ask whether they wish to take your arm or where you should walk.
- { Identify the arrival or departure of others, naming and introducing them; they do not do so themselves.
- { If giving directions, be precise, clear and specific; e.g., "on your left," "about 3 feet in front of you"

Avoid

- { Leaving students alone in the middle of a room