

# Teaching Strategies for students with visual impairments

There is a range of inclusive teaching and assessment strategies that can assist **all** students to learn but there are some specific strategies that are useful in teaching a group which includes students with vision impairment.

- Prepare as much information as possible in electronic format - this makes it much easier to provide materials in accessible formats and allows users with VI to adapt the information to a format which is suitable for them.
- Make required book lists and course materials available early so there is sufficient time for them to be reproduced in audio or Braille, if required.
- Indicate compulsory texts in your reading list, noting important chapters if possible. Specifying the order of reading within a text is helpful, as it can take many weeks to have a book reproduced into audio or Braille.
- For students with vision impairment your teaching style will need to be 'verbal'. Think about how to communicate information to students who cannot see what you are doing.
- Verbalise what is written on the blackboard and on PowerPoints. Talk through any calculations as they are made or procedures as they are carried out. Read any printed information and describe any charts or graphs being used.
- Provide an individual orientation to laboratory equipment or computers in order to minimise the anxiety likely in an unfamiliar environment.
- Consider supplementing laboratory practicals, experiments or field trips, for example by audio taping commentaries.
- Inform the student if you plan to use videos, slides or PowerPoints, and discuss alternative ways of presenting the necessary information.
- Because students with vision impairment are generally slower than other students in completing reading tasks (reading is slower; considerable time is involved in getting material taped or Brailled), provide reading lists well before the start of a course so that reading can begin early. Consider tailoring reading lists and provide guidance to key texts.
- Providing the student with a vision impairment with prior notice that you plan to use a film or video in class allows him/her the option to request to see it beforehand. This will enable him/her to sit very close to the screen or have someone explain the film or video. It would be helpful to 'pause' on important points when the student is viewing the resource in class with others.
- Students may not be able to read your hand-written comments. It would be helpful if you could negotiate alternative feedback alternatives with the student.
- Students are usually able to access online learning materials with the use of assistive technologies if websites follow accessible web design guidelines.
- The vision of some students may be affected by the glare from lights or sunlight so you may need to attend to some aspects of your teaching environment.
- Use tactile graphics where necessary

- Encourage students to use their assistive devices

## **Assessment Strategies**

In considering alternative forms of assessment, equal opportunity not a guaranteed outcome, is the objective. You are not expected to lower standards to accommodate students with VI but rather are required to give them a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. Once you have a clear picture of how the disability impacts on learning, you can consider alternative assessment strategies:

- Students with a vision impairment may need particular adjustments to assessment tasks. Once you have a clear picture of how VI impacts on learning you can consider alternative assessment strategies.
- Provide extensions to assignment deadlines if extensive reading has been set. Consider setting alternative assignments in which students have the opportunity to work intensively on a few selected texts rather than having to read widely.
- Examination papers may need to be enlarged or Brailled, with tactile diagrams, maps etc. It may be necessary to provide heavy line paper, a scribe or special writing implements.
- Some students may undertake examinations using a personal computer with assistive software. Some may need other assessment adjustments such as a reader/scribe, an oral examination, audio taped questions or large print papers. It may be necessary to provide extra space for equipment and specific personnel or a separate examination venue if the noise from equipment being used is likely to be distracting for other students.
- Provide extra time in examinations. Some students with vision impairment will require double time for examinations so time for rest breaks will be essential. Take-home examinations or split papers are a preferred option under such circumstances.