



**DISABILITY
RIGHTS UNITS**

BLIND

ENVISION2030

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence

CREATIVE. DISTINCTIVE. IMPACTFUL.

BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Here are some tips to guide you when assisting people with visual impairments:

- Identify yourself when greeting someone who has vision loss, even if the person knows your voice.
- In social situations, introduce the individual. Bring them into the conversation. Identify and introduce others who are present.
- Talk directly to the person. Do not ask questions through another person. Do not speak in a loud voice. Also, do not assume that other senses are different because of vision loss.
- Although it is important to be sensitive, do not be afraid to use phrases such as “See what I mean?”.
- Do not be concerned if an individual does not look directly at you. They may look down or slightly away from you.
- Do not assume that an individual walking with a cane needs or wants your help. Ask, “May I help you?” or “May I walk with you?”. Invite the individual to take your arm, rather than taking their arm or pushing/ pulling in the right direction.
- When entering a new building, a walk-through helps an individual understand the building’s layout. As you walk together, point out key locations such as safety exits, restrooms and so forth. Help the individual feel comfortable and safe.



- Use specific directions, such as “left in five steps” or “right in two metres” when directing a person with a visual impairment.
- Don’t worry about using words such as “see” or “look” in your conversation. These words are a part of everyday conversation and are not offensive.
- Not all visually impaired people read Braille. Ask the person what alternative format they prefer.
- Place the person’s hand on the side or back of the chair when seating them.
- Remember that you’ll need to communicate any written information orally.
- When conversing in a group, identify the person who is speaking and to whom you are speaking.
- If you are not sure what to do, ask, “Can I help?”

If you are a student with a visual impairment, **DRU can assist you:**

Whatever the degree of impairment, visually impaired students should be expected to participate fully in classroom activities, such as discussions and group work. If you are blind or partially sighted, DRU can offer a range of support services, strategies and resources to enable you to perform to your potential and participate in university life. DRU will liaise with academic staff so that the modification of materials, necessary accommodations, permission to record lectures, provision of lecture notes and reading/book lists are provided well in advance and any necessary psychological or social support is provided by Student Counselling and Health Unit. At the DRU, we will consult with you on the support you need, preferred methods of communication and accessing written information. In order to fully support you, you will need to come to the DRU and apply for the necessary reasonable accommodations/concession. We also advise the academic staff on ways to help enable you to fully access lectures, seminars and tutorials.

- Identify food served at social gatherings. If the event is self-serve, offer to help the individual through the line.
- As early as possible, tell individuals about changes in meeting times or locations so that they can make arrangements for assistance, if needed. Offer to help if needed and appropriate.
- When offering assistance to a person with a visual impairment, allow that person to take your arm. This will enable you to guide, rather than propel or lead the person.

We can assist you with your requests for brailing and enlargements (of tests and exams) as well as help you in finding readers, note-takers or tutors.

While the dru helps to identify your individual support needs, we can also offer the following:

- Modified exam arrangements in consultation with your faculty.
- Concessions.
- Reasonable accommodations.
- Training, assistance and advice regarding assistive technology, hardware and software.
- Access to study material in alternative formats (Braille, audio, electronic text, print enlargement).
- Liaison with academic staff.
- Equipment hire. The aim of these assistive technologies is to help level the playing field for students with visual impairments, not to give them an added advantage over other non-disabled students.



The DRU offers the following assistive technologies for blind or partially sighted students:

- AWS (Job Access With Speech).
- NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access).
- Braille embosser/printer.
- Braille note-taker.
- Duxbury Braille translator.
- Computer laboratory.
- The conversion of documents into electronic format, Braille or enlargements (booked well in advance).
- White Cains (together with the SA National Council for the Blind).
- ZoomText software.
- Digital recorders to record lectures. It is the responsibility of the student to provide the DRU with the required notes and textbooks that must be converted to an alternative format within two weeks of the start of each new semester. If you do not provide us with the material in advance, we will not be able to assist you in time.

Visual impairment varies greatly. Persons are considered legally blind when visual acuity is 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of corrective lenses. Most legally blind persons have some vision. Others who are partially sighted may rely on residual vision with the use of adaptive equipment. Totally blind persons may have visual memory, its strength depending on the age when vision was lost. It's important to note that people with visual impairments do not necessarily hear better than other people or have an ultra-developed sense of touch – it's just that they may have trained their other senses to assist them with mobility.

