

Blindness and Vision Impairment

Beginning study

Depending on the degree of your vision impairment and the nature of any vision you do have, some aspects of study may be challenging for you. It is important to consider giving staff clear information about your vision so staff are in the best position to work with you on achieving your goals.

You, the academic staff in your programme, and Disability Services staff, need to have a good understanding of factors such as:

- how you access text based and visual information (e.g. enlarged print, electronic text, audio, Braille),
- challenges you have in accessing and presenting information in alternative formats,
- your use of adaptive technology and other equipment,
- your ability to sustain concentration if it is a strain for you to process written text,
- your need for breaks to reduce eye strain and fatigue,
- your mobility needs, including whether you use a Guide dog,
- any course related situations which may raise safety issues for you or others you are working with.

Adaptive equipment and orientation training

If you require personal access to adaptive equipment such as a CCTV viewer or Braille device or if you will need assistance with orientation training around the campus, it is your responsibility to make these arrangements with the Blind Foundation before your programme of study begins. Some equipment and initial orientation assistance may be available through Disability Services.

Alternative formats for course materials

If you require course materials in alternative formats, please register with Disability Services at Ara as soon as possible. It will take some weeks to prepare or obtain books, handouts and other materials in your preferred format. If you delay making your needs known, then course materials may not be available when you require them.

Disability Services can also assist you to pass on information about your vision related needs to the academic staff teaching your courses.

Suggestions for successful learning and study

Before classes start

- Before your classes start, check the layout of your classrooms and work out the best seating arrangement to meet your needs with regard to hearing, light and ease of access. Once classes start, arrive at class early to claim your preferred seat.
- Depending on your needs, Disability Services can assist you to provide tutors with information such as the importance of reading out anything written on the board or displayed on powerpoint, using specific colours for whiteboard pens, and requesting speakers to give their names before starting to speak.

Reading course material

- Give Disability Services early notice to make sure you have course materials in your preferred format.
- Find out from your tutor which is the most important article, chapter or book in your required course reading and read that first.
- If you need more information about effective reading strategies, make an appointment with Learning Services so you can make the best use of your reading time.
- If required, speak with Disability Services about access to screen reading software or a CCTV viewer during your out-of-class study time at Ara.

Writing

- Discuss your notetaking needs with Disability Services staff. You may be eligible to borrow a recording device or have notetaking support.
- Make an appointment at Learning Services to get help with skills such as planning and writing your assignment, essay and report writing and notetaking skills.
- Talk to Disability Services about options and strategies if you find reading and writing difficult for tests and exams.

Contact Disability Services

Phone: 940 8089 email: disability@ara.ac.nz

For more information:

Blind Foundation: <http://blindfoundation.org.nz/>

Study strategies:

http://services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/resources/towards_success/blind_and_low_vision