

Blind or Partially Sighted

Definition

A visual impairment is a generic term which covers a range of difficulties with vision and includes the following categories: blind, legally blind, partially sighted, and low vision.

Partially sighted indicates some type of visual problem has resulted in a need for special education.

Low vision generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes Braille.

Legally blind indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point).

Totally blind students learn via Braille or other non-visual media

The student with visual impairment is one whose visual acuity is not sufficient to participate with ease in everyday activities. The impairment interferes with optimal learning and achievement and can result in a substantial educational disadvantage, unless adaptations are made in the methods of presenting learning opportunities, the nature of the materials used and/or the learning environment. It is not intended to include students described as having visual perceptual difficulties (i.e. dyslexia) unless they also have a vision loss as described above.

Most students with visual impairment require specialized equipment (e.g., Braille, audio recorders, optical aids, assistive technology) and adapted learning resources (e.g., Braille texts, enlarged print books, recordings).

Documentation

Documentation of a visual impairment needs to be completed by a Certified Ophthalmologist or Optometrist or family doctor, within the last five years. With this documentation students may be eligible to access appropriate support services and possibly adaptive technology to reduce barriers to learning.

Student Strategies and Accommodations

Meet with Accessibility Service Coordinator at least 3 months before starting your course. They can help you plan, provide support and possibly assist in accessing adaptive technology. It is your responsibility to provide appropriate documentation.

Technology to reduce barriers may be accessed with appropriate documentation.

Accommodations need to be requested at least four months in advance to be arranged for the start of the semester, such as the need for large print material, audio recorders, alternative text book formats, mobility assistance, course outlines in a format that software can read.

Take a reduced course load.

Request a campus tour.

Accommodations may include: recording of lectures, extra time and a quiet room to write exams, text to speech software, classroom assistants if approved, or a computer to write exams.

If using a guide dog, the guide dog will need to be approved by the Accessibility Coordinator using Selkirk College dog on campus policy

*These are suggestions only – you will find what works best for you.

Instructor Strategies and Accommodations

Offer to guide student around room in first class and/or explain room layout.

Inform student if classroom has been rearranged since previous class.

If student uses a guide dog, allow time at the beginning of the first class for student to introduce and explain guide dog.

Encourage student to sit at front of class, as student needs to be able to hear as well as possible.

Present all important material verbally.

Don't rely heavily on movies/ DVD's, especially for material to be tested on – if DVD is used, explain/summarize for student.

Speak in normal voice and with normal vocabulary facing the class.

Give student special consideration when going on a field trip.

If class has to move and student requires mobility guide that is not present, be sure mobility assistance is offered.

Accommodations may include:

Recorded lectures.

Extra time for assignments in alternate format.

Extra time for exams in a quiet setting.

Alternate exam format.

Use of a text to speech software, as a secondary option a reader and/or scribe, or a computer for exams.

If possible give assignments well ahead of time, as the student will likely require assistance with finding and reading research material, as well as the timely use of specialized equipment and/or adapted learning resources.

Links

Canadian National Institute for the blind: <https://cnib.ca/en?region=bc>

Student with visual impairments:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching-tools/inclusive/students-with-visual-impairments.pdf>