

# Visual Impairment

## Information pack for students



### Definition of a Disability

The Equality Act (2010) replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) in providing protection and legal rights for disabled people. It uses the following definition of disability:

*“The Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term (i.e. has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months) adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”*

More information on the Act can be found at

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG\\_4001068](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068)

### ▶ Getting an assessment

#### Getting an assessment involves the following:

- Discussion of study needs, including study skills and any technical equipment that may be useful
- Reporting to your Local Authority to register as blind or partially sighted. Registration involves the following steps:
  - Appointment with your GP
  - Referral to a consultant at the local eye hospital – John Radcliffe Hospital
  - Register with a Social Worker – local social services
  - Register as Blind or Partially Sighted with your local authority.

Registration is voluntary, although it does mean that you can claim certain benefits. You do not need to be registered to claim the Disabled Students’ Allowance.

There is a Mobility Officer who can be contacted through local Social Services offices and should be able to offer support, advice and help

with mobility. Liaison Offices of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association may also be able to help.

### ▶ **Financial Assistance**

Information about applying for **funding** can be found at:

[www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/funding](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/funding)

### **Alternative Funding Sources**

#### **Action for Blind People**

Grants Manager

14-16 Verney Road

London

SE16 3DZ

Tel: 020 7635 4800

website: [www.afbp.org](http://www.afbp.org) email: [info@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:info@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

You may qualify for a grant in aid if you need a holiday or assistive software and live in an area covered by one of their access teams. For more info go to [www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/our-services/independent-living/your-money](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/our-services/independent-living/your-money) or email [grants.team@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:grants.team@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

#### **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Employment and Student Support Network:**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

Helps blind or visually impaired students in higher education with the purchase of equipment or services needed as a direct result of their visual impairment; will not normally help people in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowances.

### ▶ **Study Skills**

#### **Planning Ahead**

Any student can find that the volume of written material presents a daunting task. A visually impaired student will find the task relatively greater. However, it is worth remembering that no student has to read everything, only the essential and important reading matter. Isolating this material (with the help of your tutor if possible) is crucial given that

accessible material may be in short supply: **Reading needs should be planned, with reading lists available in plenty of time. Students should tell tutors their special reading needs and ask their tutors to annotate reading lists to show essential, important and useful reading.**

You may be able to employ a personal reader. Sources of funding are the Disabled Students' Allowance and the charitable organisations listed above.

Students of all subjects need to try and get their reading lists well in advance. This is for the following reasons:

- to allow you to have material produced in alternative formats, such as audio or Braille. The University has a service called the Accessible Resources Acquisition and Creation Unit [ARACU], which is part of the library services. It can provide alternative formats such as audio recordings (DAISY), PDF images, Word documents and Braille.
- to allow you the extra time you need to organise your study
- so that any photocopying can be done in time.
- **Scientists:** Practicals may present a particular problem for the blind and partially sighted student. You need to liaise with your tutor to find out what is/is not feasible for you.
- **Lectures:** Talk to your lecturers and see how they can help you with compiling lecture notes and also any diagrams that they use.

## ▶ **Diagrams**

Diagrams may be a particular problem, so here are some 'handy hints' for both tutors and students.

Sometimes all that is needed is to reproduce the diagram in better contrast, perhaps by redrawing in bold black on white, or highlighting in some way. Photocopiers are useful to enlarge the material, however, the final size of a complicated diagram may make handling difficult.

A hand held low vision aid such as a magnifier, may be helpful but is limited because the greater the degree of magnification the harder it

becomes to understand the diagram, to the point where seeing the relationships of the parts may be impossible.

Close Circuit Television can be very useful but they are not particularly portable and so use tends to be limited to study in your room.

### **Non-visual techniques – tactile diagrams:**

Tactile diagrams can be produced by a number of methods. Before producing them, however, a few modifications to the diagram may help:

- (a) Redraw the original to include only essential points
- (b) Keep it small – about the area that can be covered by an open hand
- (c) Don't be too detailed – lines less than 15 mm apart cannot be easily distinguished
- (d) Do not try for exact scale – it will not work on a tactile diagram
- (e) Several tactile diagrams may be needed to deal with one printed one
- (f) Keep keys to a minimum – tracing a line to refer to a key is distracting.

Tactile diagrams may also be produced using **low-tech methods**, such as drawing with a ball point on a film resting on a hard rubber backing. Other methods include German duplication foil (which can then be labelled in a braille), or plastic/manilla sleeves. The sleeves consist of a sheet of plastic film attached to a sheet of manilla Braille paper with a rubber mat inserted between them. Another option is to use thin aluminium foil (0.7 mm thick).

Diagrams showing an outline of essential points can be made using other materials. String, thin wire, sandpaper, cardboard, cloth and blue-tack or other aids can be used – it just takes imagination!

More complicated diagrams can be built by using textured shapes or different agreed types of line - broken, dotted etc. It might help to supplement the diagram with articles that have the shape it is intended to convey.

### **Transcription of written material into alternative formats through ARACU or other sources.**

You should consider the following:

- Whether the whole book or only part of it is required

- Whether footnotes, diagrams, tables , bibliographies, indexes etc. are needed
- The date when you need the transcription completed. You need to bear in mind the final deadline for the work as it can take several weeks for material to be recorded, scanned or converted into Braille, sent out and then read. The sooner you can get material to the alternative formats provider the better.
- Are there any specific requirements? e.g. technical terms and abbreviations spelt out in recordings or a particular layout in Braille.
- A Word document will Braille easier and with limited editing required if it is written using styles. Helpful information is given at [www.techno-vision.co.uk/10\\_Word\\_Guidelines.htm](http://www.techno-vision.co.uk/10_Word_Guidelines.htm)

### **Tactile diagram suppliers**

- A raised diagram copying service (tactile diagrams) is available on a subscription basis from RNIB's disability access service: 01733 375000, [businesslink@rnib.org.uk](mailto:businesslink@rnib.org.uk);
- The university is able to provide tactile diagrams, contact The Accessible Resources Acquisition & Creation Unit (ARACU) 01865 283862
- Heavily lined graph paper is available from the Partially Sighted Society Tel: 01302 323132 Email: [info@partsight.org.uk](mailto:info@partsight.org.uk);

### **Braille suppliers**

Material can be transcribed into Braille through the following suppliers

- Contact the RNIB on 0845 702 3153 or [cservices@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cservices@rnib.org.uk). More information at [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- A2i Transcription Services Ltd, a commercial company based in Bristol which provides large print, Braille and tactile diagrams amongst other products. Telephone 01179 70 70 90 or email [info@a2i.co.uk](mailto:info@a2i.co.uk). More information from [www.a2i.co.uk](http://www.a2i.co.uk)

- The University has a Braille service based within ARACU. For more information please contact [aracu@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:aracu@ouls.ox.ac.uk) or telephone 01865 283862.

### ▶ Useful Equipment

The range of equipment available varies from the simple and commonplace (felt tip pens), to the complex and sophisticated (scanners).

For more information on this, please contact RNIB (Tel: 020 7388 1266).

### ▶ Examinations

Information about applying for special exam arrangements can be found at: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/exams](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das/exams)

Requests for examination concessions must be applied for via the college office.

### ▶ Useful requests for examinations

These are examples of arrangements that have been considered in the past – this is not meant to be an exhaustive list:

- **Braille print examination papers/enlarged papers** (the maximum enlargement of exam papers is A3 size). Some partially sighted students find the examination papers easier if they are printed on different coloured paper (e.g. blue/yellow paper)
- **Special venues** – this may even be your college room, under invigilation
- **Computers** may be used upon doctor's recommendation. (This includes the use of CCTV)
- **Extra time** – amount of extra time allowed will take account of your doctor's recommendation
- **Dictation of answers** to an amanuensis can be requested. Examination scripts may be written by note takers
- **Appropriate lighting.**

## ► Useful Contacts

### University Contacts

#### Disability Advisory Service Office

University Offices  
Wellington Square  
Oxford OX1 2JD  
Tel: (01865) (2)80459  
E-mail: [disability@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disability@admin.ox.ac.uk)

#### OUSU Vice-President (Welfare)

Oxford University Student Union  
Thomas Hull House  
New Inn Hall Street  
Oxford  
OX1 2DH  
Tel: (01865) (2)88450  
E-mail: [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org)

#### Accessible Resources Acquisition & Creation Unit [ARACU]

Osney One Building  
Osney Mead  
Oxford  
OX2 0EW  
Tel: (01865) (2)83862  
Fax: (01865) 793731  
E-mail: [aracu@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:aracu@ouls.ox.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/services/disability/aracu](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/services/disability/aracu)

#### Information on Libraries

Disability Librarian  
ARACU  
Osney One Building  
Osney Mead  
Oxford  
Tel: (01865) (2)83862  
E-mail: [theresa.pedroso@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:theresa.pedroso@ouls.ox.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/services/disability](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/services/disability)

## **Outside the University**

### **Oxford Eye Hospital**

West Wing  
John Radcliffe Hospital  
Headley Way  
Headington  
OX3 9DU  
Out patients: 08.30-17.00, tel 01865 231099

### **Oxfordshire Association for the Blind**

Bradbury Lodge  
Gordon Woodward Way  
Abingdon Road  
Oxford OX1 4XL  
Telephone 01865 725595  
email [vision@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:vision@oxeyes.org.uk)  
website [www.oxeyes.org.uk](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk)

### **Oxford Social Services**

Access Team  
PO Box 780  
Oxford  
OX1 9GX  
Tel: 0845 050 7666  
Fax: 01865 783111  
Out of hours emergency number: 0800 833408 (freephone)

### **RNIB Student Advisor**

RNIB  
224 Great Portland Street  
London  
W1N 6AA  
Tel: 0207 391 2151  
Registered Charity No: 226227

Details of the equipment mentioned can be found in RNIB product guides, available from:

## **RNIB Customer Services**

PO Box 173

Peterborough

Cambridgeshire

PE2 6WS

Tel: (0845) 702 3153 (price of a local call)

**SKILL – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities** is a voluntary organisation developing opportunities in further, higher and adult education and training throughout the UK. It is concerned with the special educational needs of students with physical and sensory disabilities. Membership is open to organisations, colleges and individual students. SKILL produces a number of publications relating to policy and practice in post-school education which are detailed on their publications list, available from the SKILL office. Their address is:

### **SKILL**

Unit 3

Floor 3

Radisson Court

219 Long Lane

London

SE1 4PR

**Telephone and Textphone** 020 7450 0620

Helpline: 0800 328 5050

**Fax** 020 7450 0650

E-mail: [skill@skill.org.uk](mailto:skill@skill.org.uk)

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

### **Disability Advisory Service**

E-mail: [disabililty@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disabililty@admin.ox.ac.uk)

Website: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/das)

**Tel:** +44 (0)1865 280 459

**Fax:** +44 (0)1865 289 830