WHAT IS VISUAL IMPAIRMENT?

Visual impairment (VI) refers to a significant functional loss of vision that cannot be corrected by medication, surgical operation, or ordinary optical lenses such as spectacles. It can range from being mild to severe, to complete blindness:

- **Total blindness** - no light perception
- **Severe low vision** - visual acuity of 6/120 or worse (seeing an object within 6m, as compared with the normal range at a distance of 120m or above); or, visual field: 20 degrees or less
- **Moderate low vision** - visual acuity of 6/60 to better than 6/120
- **Mild low vision** - visual acuity of 6/18 to better than 6/60

Color blindness is also one type of visual impairment (however, it is not fallen into the definition of a special educational need in Hong Kong). About two-thirds of people with visual impairment have multiple problems including cerebral palsy, epilepsy, hearing impairment and/or mental retardation.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Some of the assistive technology for individuals with visual impairment include:

- audio description for visual information, including video, photos and graphics on websites and mobile apps
- electronic book players
- electronic braille note-takers
- magnifiers and programs for computers
- optical character recognition (OCR) systems for scanning documents and converting the contents into accessible documents
- screen readers
- text-to-speech applications for digital texts

WHAT DOES SEN MEAN?

A Special Educational Need (SEN) refers to an individual student’s learning needs while facing academic challenges and difficulty in adjustment to learning environment due to a disability or an impairment, that can be a temporary or permanent condition.

SUPPORT SERVICES AT HKUST

The SEN & Diversability Team (DA) of the Counseling and Wellness Center is the primary contact with students who declare their SEN with the University. DA supports students from the very first step of the SEN declaration through completion of study at HKUST. DA officers meet with each declared student individually to map out a reasonable academic accommodation plan (aka IEP / Individualized Educational Plan) and to assess the needs for available resources and suitable support services.

The data collected will be handled with strict security and confidentiality and in compliance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance of Hong Kong. The below lists out some of the possible accommodations to address the special needs of students with visual impairment:

- allow using assistive technology in classes and testing
- assistance with lecture notes, such as Remote Video Capture (RVC), note-taker, reader or scribe
- early access to course materials for translating to alternative formats and/or large print
- extended time in testing and/or assignments
- laboratory and/or library assistant
DARE is a group of enthusiastic students who want to empower the HKUST campus community to positively impact the support to students with SEN. The role of the ambassadors is to cultivate a campus where everyone’s diverse abilities are appreciated and where everyone feels accepted and nourished.

No matter how much you know about SEN, where you are from, and who you are, you can be a part of DARE if you want to contribute to campus inclusion!

(Special thanks to DARE for the great contribution to the production of this leaflet series!

VI ETIQUETTE 101

Etiquette to be gracious around people with visual impairments:
- If you think someone who is visually impaired may need help navigating, ask first.
- If your help is accepted, allow him or her to grasp your arm just above the elbow.
- If you see someone who is visually impaired about to encounter danger, be calm and clear when you warn the person.
- Identify yourself when approaching someone who is visually impaired, or when entering a room with him/her.
- Don’t pet or distract a working guide dog.
- Always be respectful - no one wants to be labeled by how he or she are different.

CONTACT US

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