



"Hello, My Name is ..."

Tips for good communication with visually impaired people

People with visual impairments can experience significant barriers to engaging in meaningful and effective conversations with others.

Communication is so much more than what we say. Every day we respond to thousands of non-verbal cues and behaviours, including postures, facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, and tone of voice. In the University setting we also present a lot of information in a visual way.

Without visual cues and information, it can be difficult to:

- know if it is our turn to speak;
- know if the person we are talking to is interested, or is trying to move away from the conversation;
- process information quickly and accurately, and take away key points;
- know who else may be listening to our conversations;
- understand fully the depth of feeling in what someone is saying;
- understand how our views are being received by the person we are talking to.

Here are some tips to use when you are talking with a person who has visual impairment:

- Address the person by name so that they immediately know you are talking to them, and identify yourself – *Hi Philip, it's Jane*;
- Introduce other people who are present – *Saira's here and James is over at the coffee machine*
- Speak naturally, at conversational volume, and use everyday language – there is no need to avoid words like 'look' and 'see';
- Indicate when you are moving away or leaving the conversation – *Nice talking to you Daniel, I'll see you later*;
- Indicate when you are leaving the room – *I'm going to a meeting now, I should be back around lunchtime*;
- Use clear and specific language when giving instructions – *The printer is on your left*;
- Verbalise your actions, particularly during extended silences – *I'm searching for a file on my laptop*;
- In a group conversation, always make it clear who you are and who you are speaking to – *Anya, it's John here, what are your thoughts on this initiative?*;
- Give the person time to think and respond, don't leap to fill short silences;
- Vocalise your interest and attention to keep the conversation flowing – *Yes ... I see ... I understand* etc;
- When you enter a room, announce your presence so the person knows you're there. Similarly, if the person enters a room you're already in, let them know you're there.