

MEd in Vision Studies Certificate in Orientation and Mobility

ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

...A degree program and graduate certification option for those who want to work in a professional setting assisting individuals who are blind/visually impaired reach their goal of becoming safe, efficient, independent travelers.

The Program

The University of Massachusetts Boston offers a Master of Education (MEd) in Vision Studies for individuals who are interested in qualifying for certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. For those individuals with existing qualifying academic credentials, a certificate in Orientation and Mobility is also an option. The Vision Studies program is offered by the UMass Boston School for Global Inclusion and Social Development and the Northeast Resource Center for Vision Education (NERCVE) through the Institute for Community Inclusion. The program combines web-based course offerings with face-to-face curriculum features and locally-based pre-practicum and practicum field experiences.

Cooperatively established with federal, state, and private funding, the program is designed to both decrease students' on-campus commitment and increase engaged community and field-based mentored activities within each of the six New England states. Based on continued funding, this program offers scholarship support for students who qualify.

Curriculum content is approved by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI). Students who complete the program of study qualify to sit for the international professional examination and resulting certification provided by the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). Graduates of the program can expect to find employment opportunities in various settings, including state and federal agencies, and public and private schools.

The MEd in Vision Studies Orientation and Mobility track requires the completion of 37 graduate academic credits. Individuals who would like to pursue a certificate in Orientation and Mobility must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and complete a total of 28 credits. Teachers of students with visual impairment may be eligible to complete the program by earning 19-25 credits.

Core Courses for MEd in Vision Studies and Certificate Orientation and Mobility Track		
Program of Study	Courses	Credits
VISN 601	Physical and Functional Aspects of VI	3
VISN 603	Braille Communications I	3
VISN 604	Visual Functioning	3
VISN 605	Implications of Low Vision	3
VISN 621	O&M Assessment—Children	4
VISN 622	O&M Assessment—Adults	4
VISN 625	Methods of O&M	3
VISN 628	O&M Praxis	1
VISN 629	Practicum in O&M	4
		Total 28 credits
Additional courses required for MEd		
VISN 602	Education of Students with Visual Impairment	3
SPE-G 621	Introduction to Disabilities	3
VISN 640	Psycho-Social Aspects of VI	3
		Total 9 credits



Course Descriptions

VISN 601: Physical & Functional Aspects of Visual Impairment

The student is introduced to the structure and function of the main systems of the human body and to those chronic conditions which may affect these systems. Emphasis will be placed on disabilities most frequently seen in conjunction with visual impairments and how the combined impact will affect instruction for individuals with visual impairment. Having covered these areas, each of the sensory systems will also be explored with the mechanics of locomotion and psychomotor factors influencing mobility.

VISN 603: Braille Communications I

This course will train individuals to teach reading and writing of contracted Unified English Braille. Participants will learn read embossed braille visually and to write Unified English Braille using a Perkins Braille Writer, computer keyboard for six-key entry, and a slate and stylus. Topics include teaching techniques for reading readiness, tracking, tactile

discrimination, and reading methods. Reading problems and remediation will be discussed. Techniques used in education and rehabilitation will be included. The use of technology to produce braille will be reviewed.

VISN 604: Visual Functioning

This course introduces the student to the anatomy and physiology of the eye and examines refraction, clinical testing procedures, and major visual disorders. The medical component of this course provides the foundation to the remainder of the course, as it looks at the functional implications of individual eye conditions on educational and vocational services.

VISN 605: Implications of Low Vision

This course is designed to train professionals to work with individuals who have low vision in both rehabilitation and educational settings. Through selected readings and presentations on the theoretical and practical aspects of low vision, participants will acquire a solid knowledge base, and become comfortable with various low-vision concepts and methods for integrating visual needs and adapted equipment within an educational/rehabilitation environment. In addition, small group activities, case studies, and simulation will be incorporated throughout the course to provide participants with the practical application of skills and techniques learned.

VISN 621: O&M Assessment: Children

This is an instructional strategies course and applies foundations and methods to the specific populations of pre-school, elementary, and transition-aged children. Assessment tools are introduced and applied, with an emphasis on development of the students' abilities in observational skills, information gathering, and task analysis in the development of specific

objectives and lesson design for instructing children. Methods in team instruction, consultation, and itinerant teaching are examined. Competencies for the course will be integrated into both classroom and field-based experiences.

VISN 622: O&M Assessment: Adults

This is an instructional strategies course which applies foundations and methods to the specific populations of visually impaired adults, including persons over age sixty-five, those with additional disabilities, and persons of diverse cultural backgrounds. Case studies will provide the basis for discussion and serve as the foundation for the O&M internship. Assessment, observation, information gathering, and task analysis through lesson design are critical elements of this course, while the advanced systems of O&M are addressed in greater depth. Competencies for the course will be integrated into both classroom and field-based experiences.

VISN 625: Methods of Orientation and Mobility

This course examines the foundations of learning and teaching Orientation and Mobility. A weekly online lecture will provide an introduction to the principles of concept development, spatial orientation, and environmental analysis as these topics relate to independent travel by individuals who are visually impaired. This course also has a field placement component.

VISN 628: O&M Praxis Lab

This course must be taken before or concurrently with VISN 620: Methods of Orientation and Mobility (Lecture). A major component of the course will be to give students the opportunity to learn and experience O&M skills and techniques through the use of blindfolds and low-vision simulators. After mastering these skills, students will focus on teaching each other, then modifying the techniques for diverse populations. Students will meet for 20 sessions, totaling 120 hours



throughout the semester. This course is a field-based pre-practicum experience offered by an ACVREP-Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Each cohort of students is individually scheduled, based on geographic location.

VISN 629: Practicum in O&M

This course is for students who have completed course work and all prepracticum hours with both children and adults. Internships may be full-time or part-time, and interns are required to keep an ongoing diary of their experiences along with a capstone portfolio. Students must complete the clinical requirements set by ACVREP, totaling a minimum of 350 hours. Students will also prepare for the international ACVREP application and examination for certification.

VISN 602: Education of Students with Visual Impairment

This course examines the philosophical, historical and legal foundations of special education services to students with visual impairments. This course overviews the wide array of services systems, roles and responsibilities of specialized service providers and impact of visual impairment on child development.

SPE-G 621: Introduction to Disabilities

The focus of this course is to provide a foundation in the field of special education. Students will explore philosophical, historical, and sociological issues related to this area. Federal and state legislation will be presented (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - 97, No Child Left Behind Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Critical issues and controversies will be highlighted. Both typical and atypical development will provide a framework for understanding disabilities. The required curricular, behavioral, and social interventions that are associated with identified disabilities

will be explored. How to facilitate and support placement in the least restrictive environment will be discussed, as well as strategies for enhancing student outcomes. Specific concerns relative to linguistic and racial background and their impact upon special needs placement and interventions also will be explored. The critical role of parents will be emphasized.

VISN 640: Psycho-Social Aspects of Visual Impairments

This course will investigate the psycho-social aspects of vision loss. Coping techniques and issues of self-esteem will be explored along with principles of self-determination. Other topics include the psycho-social aspects of personal life management such as orientation and mobility, use of volunteers, sexuality, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Psycho-social issues specific to people from diverse cultures will also be addressed.



The Application Process

Apply to the UMass Boston Orientation and Mobility track by completing the standard graduate application provided in the Graduate Studies Bulletin or at www.umb.edu/admissions/grad, where you can print out an application or apply online with a credit card. Specify that you are applying to the MEd in Vision Studies Orientation and Mobility track or the Certificate in Orientation and Mobility. As part of the application process for the university, you are also required to:

- Obtain three letters of recommendation, using the forms provided by the Office of Graduate Admissions. Emphasis should be placed on academic and professional references.
- Complete all testing required by the university. If you do not have a master's degree, you will be required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Miller Analogy Test (MAT), or the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL).
- Submit an official transcript from each institution attended; a minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.0 is required for admissions to a master's degree program.
- Complete your statement of interest and intent by submitting a two-part essay.
 1. Explain your reasons for wishing to pursue graduate studies (approximately 300 words).
 2. Indicate your specific interest and discuss the type of work you would like to do in your intended field (at least 1,200 words).

Please note that this statement will be reviewed for both your overall message and your ability to write at the graduate level. Proofread your writing carefully; it is ranked according to its clarity, grammar, and syntax.



SCHOOL FOR GLOBAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



For more information about the Orientation and Mobility program, visit www.nercve.org

The Northeast Resource Center for Vision Education (NERCVE) is an established center within the Institute for Community Inclusion and is academically affiliated with the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development at UMass Boston.

NERCVE is dedicated to improving the education and rehabilitation of children and adults with visual impairments through regionally accessible professional educator training, technology, and research.



ABOUT UMASS BOSTON

With a growing reputation for innovative research addressing complex urban issues, the University of Massachusetts Boston, metropolitan Boston's only public university, offers its diverse student population both an intimate learning environment and the rich experience of a great American city. UMass Boston's ten colleges and graduate schools serve nearly 16,000 students while engaging local, national, and international constituents through academic programs, research centers, and public service activities. To learn more about UMass Boston, visit www.umb.edu.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Applicants are accepted into the program one time per year for the summer semester. Summer deadline is March 1st.