

Orientation and Mobility

College of Education

Master of Arts

The Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, & Counselor Education offers a Master of Arts Program in Orientation and Mobility (O&M). The program uses a hybrid course delivery model, including both face-to-face and on-line courses. Face-to-face courses occur on weekends and in the summer at either the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) in Louisville or at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

The O&M program prepares individuals to provide instruction related to knowledge and skills for independent travel for children and adults with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities. These professionals teach topics including: the use of canes and dog guides, independent travel skills, sensory and motor development, and advanced travel in complex environments.

The University of Kentucky has the distinction of offering the only O&M program in Kentucky.

Application Requirements

Applicants must have completed a bachelor's degree in any field with a minimum of 2.75 overall or 3.0 GPA in the last 30 credit hours to apply.

Applications must include the following:

- Resume/CV
- Personal Statement
 - 1-2 page statement on why you want to be an O&M specialist
- Official transcripts from all previous universities or colleges
- Three (3) references
- No GRE scores are required for admission

Application Information

Go to the [Orientation and Mobility –](#)

[Graduate](https://www.uky.edu/academics/masters/orientation-and-mobility-graduate) page at: <https://www.uky.edu/academics/masters/orientation-and-mobility-graduate> and follow the “Apply Now” link. In the “Plan of Study” the Admission Category should read “Masters degree”, then “Orientation and Mobility” for the Program. Applications are accepted in the spring on even years for a fall semester start of that year.

Degree Requirements

Program completion requires passing grades in all prerequisite and required coursework totaling a minimum of 30 credit hours with an overall GPA of 3.0. Candidates must complete a successful practicum and internship, as well as satisfactory demonstration of all program standards.

Practicum and Internship Requirements

After coursework is finished, candidates must complete an O&M internship in educational and rehabilitative settings totaling 350 hours as needed for national certification to become a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). The Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board provides a provisional and professional certificate for O&M specialists (16 KAR 2:210) working in the schools and requires that professionals complete 150-hours of their internship or other O&M instruction with children with visual impairments.

Required Program Coursework

- RC 525 Human Growth and Development (3)
- BVI 620 Foundations of Orientation and Mobility (3)
- BVI 621 Introduction to Skills and Techniques in Orientation and Mobility (2)
- BVI 622 Advanced Skills and Techniques in Orientation and Mobility (2)
- BVI 623 Orientation and Mobility with Children (3)
- BVI 624 Technology in Orientation and Mobility (1)
- BVI 626 Methods in Orientation and Mobility (3)
- BVI 627 Orientation and Mobility for Individuals with Complex Needs (3)
- BVI 628 Assessment in Orientation and Mobility (3)
- BVI 629 Practicum in Orientation and Mobility (1)
- BVI 720 Internship in Orientation and Mobility (6)

Total 30 Credits

Prerequisite Coursework

- BVI 580 Introduction to Visual Impairment (3)
- BVI 582 Anatomy and Physiology of the Eye (3)
- BVI 583 Braille Codes I (3)

For candidates who have not already completed the prerequisite courses in visual impairments at the University of Kentucky or another institution, these three courses can be taken concurrently with the required O&M coursework. All prerequisite coursework transferred in from other institutions must have a grade of no less than a B or equivalent and must be approved by the program's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Course Descriptions

RC 525 HUMAN GROWTH, DISABILITY, AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFESPAN. (3) This course provides a comprehensive study of human growth and development in the context of rehabilitation and clinical mental health counseling. Students will review human development theories across the life span and their implications and applications with persons with disabilities. Issues to be addressed include physical, emotional, moral, and cognitive development and the interaction of development and disability; human sexuality and disability; spirituality and religious aspects; transition issues as they relate to family, school, employment, aging, and disability; social and learning needs of individuals across the life span, and ethical and legal issues impacting individuals and families related to adjustment and transition. Prereq: Admission to the Rehabilitation Counseling Program or consent of instructor.

BVI 580 INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS. (3) This course will provide an introduction to the educational programs and services for students with blindness and visual impairments. Content of this course will focus on the historical foundation of the field, the developmental and psychosocial aspects of individuals with visual impairments, an overview of legislation, influential agencies, and service delivery methods. The impact of vision loss on early childhood development will also be covered. Prereq: Admission to the Teacher Preparation Program in Visual Impairments, Orientation and Mobility program, or instructor permission required.

BVI 582 ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY OF THE EYE. (3) This course will cover the anatomy and physiology of the eye, including visual development. Causes of ocular and neurological visual impairment will be addressed, treatments, and their impact on learning. Course topics will include optics, low vision devices and services, environmental adaptations, and interpreting eye reports. Learners will have the opportunity to directly observe a low vision evaluation and will learn the components of a functional vision assessment. Prereq: Admission to the Teacher Preparation Program in Visual Impairments, Orientation and Mobility program, or instructor permission required.

BVI 583 BRAILLE CODES I. (3) This course is designed to teach the literary braille code. Students will become proficient in transcribing both uncontracted and contracted braille utilizing a Perkins Brailier, slate and stylus, and six-key entry computer software with proper formatting. Students will also learn appropriate techniques for reading braille both tactually and visually. In addition, the history of the braille code will be covered as well as current resources. Prereq: Admission to the Teacher Preparation Program in Visual Impairments, Orientation and Mobility program, or instructor permission.

BVI 620 FOUNDATIONS OF ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (3) A fundamental course in the history and development of Orientation & Mobility programs, educational and rehabilitation models, and mobility systems. Philosophies, practices, standards, and ethics of O&M will be also discussed. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility Program or instructor permission is required.

BVI 621 – INTRODUCTION TO SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (2) This course is an Introduction to skills and techniques used by individuals with visual impairments and instructional strategies to facilitate independent travel including the use of the long cane and adaptive

mobility devices. Emphasis will be placed on the methods of independent travel. Students will have practical experience in traveling under blindfold and vision loss simulators in indoor, residential, and small business environments. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility Program or instructor permission is required.

BVI 622 ADVANCED SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (2) The course will focus on advanced skills and techniques used by individuals with visual impairments for independent travel in business and complex environments. Students will have practical experience in the use of the long cane and travel under blindfold and vision loss simulators. Students will gain experience in planning lessons and teaching skills to each other under instructor supervision. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility program and instructor permission.

BVI 623 ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY FOR CHILDREN. (3) The course will address the impact and effects of a visual impairment on the overall development of children with visual impairments. Course topics will include information on locomotion, concept development, O&M skill acquisition and performance for children with visual impairments. Instructional methods, strategies, and materials for teaching Orientation & Mobility concepts and skills will also be covered. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility program and instructor permission.

BVI 624 TECHNOLOGY IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (1) The course will be an introduction to the use of electronic travel aids and electronic orientation aids as a secondary mobility system for individuals with visual impairments. The advantages and disadvantages of using electronic travel devices will be identified along with instructional strategies to incorporate the use into lessons. There will be hands-on experience with using electronic devices with an emphasis on the use of cellphone applications. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility Program or instructor permission is required.

BVI 626 METHODS IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (3) The course will address a variety of topics, strategies, and approaches related to Orientation and Mobility instruction for individuals with visual impairments. Content will focus on adult rehabilitation, low vision, and low vision devices, mobility systems, echolocation, and Flash Sonar. The course content will also include instructional approaches used to assessing environments, teach complex travel environments and intersections, adapt for adverse weather conditions, and use various transportation systems. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility program and instructor permission.

BVI 627 ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS. (3) The course will discuss the impact and effects of health conditions and other disabilities among individuals with visual impairments on concept development, learning, and skill acquisition on O&M. Course content will discuss the roles of professionals in addressing complex needs of individuals with visual impairments and deaf-blindness. It will focus on instructional methods and strategies to address complex needs in an educational and rehabilitation setting. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility program and instructor permission.

BVI 628 ASSESSMENT IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (3) The course will address strategies and methods for evaluating an individual with a visual impairment and assessing an individual's progress in Orientation and Mobility. Learners also will analyze assessment results to develop and implement appropriate O&M goals and objectives. Other content will include the strategies to select and analyze environments for safety, instruction, and assessment. Prereq: Admission to the Orientation and Mobility program and instructor permission.

BVI 629 PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (1) The practicum in Orientation and Mobility will consist of supervised, field-based experience in various settings ranging from preschool, school-based, adult rehabilitation, and geriatric settings. Site approval is required by the program coordinator. Prereq: Instructor permission.

BVI 720 INTERNSHIP IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY. (1-6) Supervised professional experience for candidates in Orientation & Mobility will be offered in an educational or rehabilitation setting serving individuals with visual impairments. A minimum of 350 hours is required. This may be completed either on a fulltime or part-time basis. Prereq: Completion of Orientation & Mobility coursework and instructor permission is required.