

# Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility

## School of Optometry and Vision Science

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. Entry Requirements

**Q: What are the Entry Requirements?**

**A:** A 3-year bachelor's degree (AQF level 7) is the entry level into this program. Applicants with equivalent undergraduate qualifications or other experience are welcome to apply to determine if they might meet the requirements through alternate pathways.

**Please note:** A requirement of the US certifying body ACVREP (Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals) is that candidates have qualification of AQF 7 or higher. The program provides practical experience as part of the process for graduates to apply for industry certification i.e. the US ACVREP certification exam to become a COMS. (Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist).

**Q: Can postgraduate qualifications be assessed for credit transfer?**

**A:** Yes, please state when applying if you wish to be considered for credit transfer.

**Q. What are the preferred pathways into the Graduate Diploma of O&M?**

**A:** Relevant undergraduate degrees in health sciences, psychology, rehabilitation or education are preferable, however other degrees are also considered.

**Q: What student attributes give the best chance for student success in this program:**

**A:** As a guideline, relevant undergraduate degrees in health sciences, psychology, rehabilitation or education are preferable, however other degrees are also considered. Orientation and mobility specialist attributes also generally include physical dexterity and fitness (to train under blindfold, walk backwards on stairs, and be able to walk at least 5km); educational and emotional intelligence (accepting the duty of care for the physical safety of individuals with multi-disability) and flexibility for extensive travel to clients, both as a student and a graduate.

**Q: I have a postgraduate degree, will this be accepted?**

**A:** Yes, we accept bachelors and higher degrees. (AQF level 7).

**Q: I have a bachelor's degree from health sciences or education, can I receive credit for this?**

**A:** Students with a prior qualification in health science, education or a related area may receive credit for prior learning. Please state when applying if you wish to be considered for credit transfer.

**Q: Can work experience be considered for credit eligibility?**

**A:** Work experience can be considered for credit eligibility. Please provide CV, lived and occupational experience, work references and statement of service and specify on your application if you wish to be considered for credit eligibility. Please provide all information including whether you were supervised by a certified Orientation and Mobility specialist with ACVREP COMS certification. You will still be required to complete assessable components.

## **2. Length and Offering**

**Q: How long does it take to complete this degree.**

**A:** This program is 1 year Full Time, it is made up of 8 x 6 UoC courses. You need to complete 48 UoC over the three terms that the course runs. Half load options are available for students who wish to complete the theory (mostly online) part of the program in year 1, and practical (face to face) part in year 2. Only in exceptional circumstances will students be allowed to enrol in a reduced program. Students should take all courses in sequential order.

**Q: When is this program offered?**

**A:** In 2021 the program opened in Term 2 (31 May 2021). From 2022 onwards the program will accept new students in Term 1 (January-February) of each year. Check with Future Student Advisors [[unsw.edu.au/study/help/contact-us](https://unsw.edu.au/study/help/contact-us)] as to when program enrolments close in the preceding year.

**Q. Are all suitable applicants accepted automatically into the program?**

**A.** Program places are limited by WIL placement availability. UNSW may be able to source a WIL placement for students or with direction from UNSW students may be required to source your own WIL placement.

## **3. Cost**

**Q. How much does this program cost?**

**A.** The 2022 Fee is \$34,735 plus there is an annual student services and amenities fee of \$313.00\*. <https://student.unsw.edu.au/ssaf>. Refer to Fees & Scholarships under [Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility \(unsw.edu.au\)](https://student.unsw.edu.au/ssaf) for updated information.

\*Fees are subject to annual review by the University and may increase annually, with the new fees effective from the start of each calendar year. The indicative fees listed here are based on an estimated average and are for tuition only other fees and charges are not included. The amount you pay will vary depending on the calendar year you enrol in, the courses you select and whether your study load is more or less than 1 Equivalent Full Time Student Load (8 courses per year). Indicative fees are a guide for comparison only based on current conditions and available data. You should not rely on indicative fees. More information on fees can be found at the [UNSW fees website](#).

**Q. Are there Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP)?**

**A.** Yes, there are CSP places: <https://www.news.futurestudents.unsw.edu.au/understand-commonwealth-supported-places>.

The University will not release these until the end of the year, at which time those who are successful for a CSP place will be contacted by the University.

**Q. Does this program qualify for HECS-HELP?**

**A.** Yes, please refer to: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/hecs>. to find out if you are eligible for HECS-HELP.

**Q. Are there other costs associated with this program?**

**A.** Students will be required to attend techniques training practicals, a low vision clinic observation and work integrated learning (WIL) placements. The cost associated with attending the practical components (in particularly travel, accommodation and meeting away-from-home costs) will be met by the student. Students will also be required to purchase mobility cane sets (cost as of February 2022: AUD\$220).

**4. Learning and Teaching**

**Q. Can this program be taken part time?**

**A.** This is an intensive full-time program. Half load options are available for students who wish to complete the theory part of the program in year 1 (mostly online), and practical part in year 2 (face to face).

**Q. Is this program taught face to face or online?**

**A.** Lectures and tutorials are on-line, with approximately 1 hour face-to-face on-line tutorials per course per week. There are practicals made up of a work integrated learning (WIL) component and real-world simulation training (techniques teaching). Students will need to travel to Sydney for 4-5 weeks of techniques teaching. Whilst every effort will be made for the remainder of face-to-face learning to occur in a student's home state, if appropriate supervision (COMS) and/or techniques teachers cannot be arranged for students residing outside of Sydney, students might also need to travel to Sydney (or elsewhere) for this remaining face-to-face learning.

## **Q. What is Techniques Teaching?**

**A.** Simulation-teacher training hours are referred to as techniques training. Prior to engaging in WIL, students will complete part, or all components of the O&M Techniques course (VISN5521) to prepare for the work integrated learning (WIL) placement. These techniques equip the student to be 'WIL ready' and involves over 80 hours of both blindfold and simulation training. The practical is a compulsory 4 to 5 weeks of face-to-face techniques training (at UNSW in Sydney) with extra techniques training in home states as required. Students will also be required to purchase mobility cane equipment sets for the techniques training.

The planned compulsory **2023 dates** where students will need to travel to Sydney at their own costs to attend 2 face-to-face, compulsory technique training teaching blocks are: Block 1: 20 February - 3 March and Block 2: 22 May - 9 June 2023. Or refer to Grad Dip In Orientation and Mobility (5420) at: [Postgraduate resources | School of Optometry and Vision Science - UNSW Sydney](#) to download a copy of the 2023 O&M program calendar for the techniques training dates.

## **Q. What is Work Integrated Learning?**

**A.** Work integrated learning (WIL) placements form a significant portion of the program commencing over Terms 2 and 3 as part VISN5523: O&M in Practice. WIL provides opportunities for supervised work integrated learning and external placements at partner organisations providing O&M services. Through WIL, students are exposed to a wide breath of experience and opportunity to be able to demonstrate clinical competence with various populations of individuals with blindness and low vision, including children, adults, and individuals with multiple disabilities.

The UNSW O&M Graduation program is designed in accordance with [ACVREP](#) guidelines, providing practical experience - through WIL, as part of the process for graduates to apply for industry certification i.e. the US ACVREP certification exam to become a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). To apply for COMS, ACVREP requires candidates to meet minimal competencies during a minimum of 350 hours of discipline-specific supervised practice<sup>1</sup>. During the UNSW Graduate program, students work towards meeting all UNSW competencies to graduate level having completed 250 hours which includes up to 175 instructional hours of discipline-specific supervised practice within the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement. Students may be employed on graduation, and if required by the employer or desired by the student, will need to make their own arrangements for completing additional hours of supervised practice to meet ACVREP requirements prior to applying for COMS.

The duration of the placement is dependent on successful completion of meeting UNSW competencies and hours to graduate level. It should be noted that as it is not possible to complete 35

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<sup>1</sup> [Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist \(COMS\) - ACVREP](#)

hours of supervised practice with clients each week, the stipulated hours required does NOT convert to multiplying this by a 35-hour-week placement but will be significantly longer.

Students ideally will undertake either one or two WIL placements. The duration and location of each placement will therefore vary according to individual placement requirements given placements are dependent on individual partner organisation and student requirements. . Start and end dates will therefore also vary accordingly and are not necessarily confined to Term dates. WIL placements may be in a student's home state where possible, however students will need to travel within the state/and to see clients in different locations. As mentioned above, if appropriate supervision (COMS) and/or techniques trainers cannot be arranged for students residing outside of Sydney, students might need to travel to Sydney (or elsewhere) for this face-to-face learning. The cost associated with this work experience will be met by the student.

In order to comply with organisational requirements students will need to have a Working With Children Check (WWCC), criminal history check, National Disability Insurance Scheme Workers Check (NDISWC) and abide by the immunisation, vaccination and safety protocols from the relevant health authorities for students in training. Requirements will be outlined specially to students when placements are secured.

**Q. Can you tell me about the simulation and workplace Integrated learning (WIL) component of the program?**

A. The program delivery mode is full time, largely through distance online education with face-to-face practical components required to be completed as part of the Graduate Diploma.

The practical components include:

- Four to five weeks of face-to-face **techniques training** (at UNSW in Sydney) with extra techniques training in home states as required,
- a (half-day) **low vision clinic observation**, and
- **Workplace integrated learning (WIL)** placements. WIL is a major component of this program, providing opportunities for supervised work integrated learning and external placements in orientation and mobility services at industry partners. It is a requirement that during WIL, students meet a minimum graduate competency levels across seven clinical competencies.

**Q. I don't live in NSW, can I complete this program in another State?**

A. Yes you can. Other than the four to five weeks of face-to-face **techniques training** (at UNSW in Sydney) we are hoping you will have the opportunity to complete your placements in your home state. However, this may not necessarily be possible and will be based on availability and demand. If a WIL placement cannot be arranged in your state, then you may need to undertake this requirement in another state.

## Q. What courses should I take each Term?

A. Full Load Option		
Term One 2023	Term Two 2023	Term Three 2023
1. VISN5511 The Visual System, Impairments & Implications 6UoC	4. VISN5521 Orientation and Mobility Techniques 6UoC	7. VISN5523 Orientation and Mobility in Practice B 6 UoC (4,5)
2. VISN5512 Sensory Processes and Movement 6UoC	5. VISN5522 Vision Rehabilitation 6UoC (2,3)	8. VISN5531 Development and Ageing: Implications for Orientation and Mobility 6UoC (2,3)
3. VISN5513 Orientation and Mobility Foundations: Disability, Diversity and Inclusion 6UoC	6. VISN5523 Orientation and Mobility in Practice A 6 UoC (2)	
A. Half Load Option		
Year 1 - Term One 2023	Year 1 - Term Two 2023	Year 1 - Term Three 2023
1. VISN5511 The Visual System, Impairments & Implications 6UoC	3. VISN5522 Vision Rehabilitation 6UoC (1,2)	4. VISN5531 Development and Ageing: Implications for Orientation and Mobility 6UoC (2,3)
2. VISN5513 Orientation and Mobility Foundations: Disability, Diversity and Inclusion 6UoC		
Year 2 - Term One 2024	Year 2 - Term Two 2024	Year 2 - Term Three 2024
5. VISN5512 Sensory Processes and Movement 6UoC	6. VISN5521 Orientation and Mobility Techniques 6UoC (1,2,3)	8. VISN5523 Orientation and Mobility in Practice B 6 UoC (4,5)
	7. VISN5523 Orientation and Mobility in Practice A 6 UoC (2)	

(x) = prerequisites

## Q. What sort of job opportunities will be available once I have completed the Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility?

**A.** The UNSW Graduate Diploma in O&M is the only program of its kind in Australia. Currently there are a lack of orientation and mobility specialists in Australia, particularly in rural areas. There is the opportunity of working in non-for-profit rehabilitation organisations, the private sector, in research and overseas, i.e. Singapore, Africa and the Pacific Islands are in need of O&M specialists.

## Q. Registration with ACVREP

**A.** Following completion of the Graduate Diploma in O&M, graduates wishing to achieve certification (COMS) with ACVREP will need to complete the remainder of required supervised practice hours and will need to pass a certification exam. The Graduate Diploma in O&M provides theoretical knowledge and practical experience as part of the process for graduates to apply for industry certification to become a COMS.