

MEd in Vision Studies: VRT Certificate in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy

VISION REHABILITATION THERAPY

...For those who want to work in areas that enhance the vocational opportunities, independent living, and educational development of persons with vision loss, including center-based or itinerant settings.

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 a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. For those individuals with existing qualifying academic credentials, a certificate in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy 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 national 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, Vision Rehabilitation Therapy track requires the completion of 37 graduate academic credits. Individuals who would like to pursue a certificate in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and complete a total of 28 credits. Those who have a background in visual impairment may be eligible to complete the program by earning 19-25 credits.

Core Courses for MEd in Vision Studies and Certificate Vision Rehabilitation Therapy 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 630	Introduction to VRT	4
VISN 631	Methods of VRT I	4
VISN 632	Methods of VRT II	4
VISN 639	VRT Practicum	4
Total 28 credits		
Additional courses required for MEd		
VISN 640	Psycho-Social Aspects of VI	3
VISN 646	Introduction to Audiology	3
REHAB 612	Voc. Rehab. & Placement	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, students 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 students with the practical application of skills and techniques learned.

VISN 630: Introduction to VRT

This course examines the functional implications of vision loss on primary activities of daily living, with emphasis in basic methodologies of orientation and mobility and rehabilitation teaching. Exploration of life skills essential to independence will be addressed in relation to student and adult populations. Weekly lecture content will be enhanced by functional lab activities designed to give the student the opportunity to experience and critically assess the effectiveness of the current methodology.

VISN 631: Methods of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy I

This course is designed to provide the student with hands-on instruction, independent learning and laboratory practice in the methodologies and adaptive techniques utilized by the professional vision rehabilitation therapist in the personal management / recreation and leisure areas of independent living skills. This course will emphasize the use of adaptive techniques and resources gathering, and will address skills that are applicable for adults and older adults as well as children and adolescents. Laboratory experience with blindfolds and low vision simulators will provide each student with the opportunity to practice recommended techniques and adaptations that will facilitate the teaching of selected

independent living skills to children and adults who are blind or who have low vision.

VISN 632: Methods of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy II

This course provides an in-depth examination of assessment tools, resources and instructional methodology associated with the expanding area of communications and technology. The course builds upon the foundational courses to advance instructional competency in braille, low-vision handwriting, drawing and computer technologies. Students have the opportunity to learn and experience instructional techniques through the use of blindfolds and low-vision simulators. After acquiring these skills, students will focus on teaching each other, then modifying the techniques for diverse populations.

VISN 639: VRT Practicum

This course and its associated advanced seminar series are for students who have completed course work pre-practicum hours. Enrollment may be full-time or part-time but must be completed in two semesters. Interns are required to keep an ongoing diary of their experiences along with a capstone portfolio documenting clinical requirements set by ACVREP, totaling a minimum of 350 hours.

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.

VISN 646: Introduction to Audiology and the Human Auditory System

This course will cover the nature of sound and how humans perceive it. Sound in the environment and how sound is used by humans to move through their environment will also be explored. Topics include the basics of sound, anatomy and physiology of the auditory system with an emphasis on function, common disorders of the auditory system and how these disorders are manifested. The principles of basic audiology and how to understand and relate to the audiologist provide a foundation for hearing both clinically and functionally. Students will learn hearing aid technology and the application of that technology to various auditory disorders in a functional sense.

REHAB 612: Vocational Rehabilitation & Placement

This course seeks to provide students with information about the total vocational rehabilitation process, including follow-up services. Topics include the referral process; eligibility criteria; comprehensive (medical, psychological, vocational) assessment; vocational training; and placement.

The Application Process

Apply to the UMass Vision Rehabilitation Therapy 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 Vision Rehabilitation Therapy track or the Certificate in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. 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.





For more information about the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy 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 a year for the fall semester. Fall deadline is June 1st.