Masters in Special Education with Orientation and Mobility Certificate

INTRODUCTION

The Visual Impairment and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) is administered by the James L Perkins College of Education, Department of Human Services. Students already holding at least an undergraduate degree can be eligible for O&M Certification by taking 33 credit hours of prescribed courses. A student who is certified as a teacher of the visually impaired can be eligible to add O&M certification by taking 21 credit hours*.

Students needing to take SPE 515, 516, 518, 519, and 552 will take courses using internet delivery often along with students in the teacher of the visually impaired program. The courses meet in the evening using programs that allow for conversation and presentation of material over the internet.

The following courses are required to be eligible to take the National Exam for Orientation & Mobility Certification from The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). Passing that test is required in order to be certified as an O&M Specialist by ACVREP and to use the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) title.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

SPE 500, 515, 516, 518, 519, 521, 552, 556, 570, 573, 593, 594, 595.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

First Year- Summer I & II

**SPE 500 – Beginning Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility (6 hours)
An analysis and implementation of those skills, techniques, and principles which enable an individual with a visual impairment to move independently with safety and efficiency.

SPE 516 – The Eye, Its Function and Health
Designed to familiarize the student with the structure, function and possible pathologies of the eye and of the visual system and the impact of these on the process of seeing. The Functional Vision Evaluation / Learning Media Assessment process is also introduced.
First Year - Fall
SPE 515 – Programs and Services for Individuals with Visual Impairments
Foundations in Visual Impairment. Provides a broad overview of various aspects of blindness (e.g., agencies which provide services to persons with visual impairments, psychological and sociological aspects of blindness, history of the field).

SPE 552 – Instructional Strategies for Individuals with Visual and Multiple Impairments
Students study a wide array of conditions that often accompany vision loss as well as educational programming considerations, assessment, and adaptation of environments for these students.

SPE 593 – Intermediate Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Supervised practicum experience (60 hours minimum) teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with visual impairment. Allows the student to apply personal values, theory, and a philosophy of working with persons with disabilities.

First Year - Spring
SPE 518 – Orientation and Mobility Skills and Concepts
Development of children with typical eyesight versus children with visual impairment. Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness, and mobility are emphasized. Basic mobility skills including cane concepts and techniques and human guide are addressed.

SPE 519 – Low Vision

SPE 594 – Advanced Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Additional 60 hours minimum of supervised practicum experience teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with visual impairment. Allows student to apply personal values, theory, and a philosophy of working with persons with disabilities.

Second Year - Summer
SPE 595 – Practicum in Orientation and Mobility (6 hours)
Should be taken after completing all of the other required courses. Per ACVREP Guidelines, internship requires 350 hours of one-on-one instruction under the supervision of a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Internship placements vary depending upon the needs of the student and availability.

Second Year - Fall
SPE 573 – Leadership in Visual Impairment
Designed to facilitate effective and practical development of leadership qualities, training, advocacy, and program development to improve the lives and/or educational outcomes of children, youth, and adults who are blind or visually impaired. This course will provide training that addresses leadership and program development in the areas of visual impairment.

SPE 521 – Teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum to Students with Visual Impairments
The expanded core curriculum includes areas such as assistive technology, compensatory skills, career education, independent living skills, recreation & leisure, etc. This class provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the importance of the expanded core curriculum and how it should be taught.
SPE 570 – Independent Project in Visual Impairment (6 hours)
This is the capstone class of the M.Ed. program. It is broken up in two 3-semester hour courses. In this class, students develop and execute their own research project. The student will work under the direction of a faculty person in a one-on-one arrangement.

Second Year- Spring
SPE 556 – Infancy and Early Childhood for Individuals with Visual Impairment
This class provides an in-depth examination of how learning takes place during the first five years of life of persons with visual and visual/multiple impairments. It also provides students with vital information about educational programming and intervention strategies that apply to these children.

SPE 570 – Independent Project in Visual Impairment (6 hours)
This is the second half of the capstone class of the M.Ed. program. In this class, students continue to develop and execute their own research project. The student will work under the direction of a faculty person in a one-on-one arrangement.

Additional Information
* Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired only need to take SPE 500, SPE 519, SPE 593, SPE 594, and SPE 595 if a transcript review shows they have taken SPE 515, 516, 518, and 552 or their equivalent within the last seven years. O&M certification will only accept courses taken for university credit. Alternate certification courses cannot be used towards O&M certification.

** SPE 500 is known as the blindfold course and involves 60 clock hours of instruction under the blindfold as well as 6 hours per week of seminar. The course will be offered during the summer and students will have to be able to come to campus at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX for approximately 6 weeks of daily instruction (in the summer). If accepted for grant funding, the expenses for room and board will be covered (the grant will also cover all or a portion of tuition and most fees for training). In rare instances a graduate student can complete the blindfold course during the spring semester. In those VERY rare cases, graduate students will attend classes along with undergraduates and receive weekly training over the 16-week semester. No support for room or board will be offered for students who pursue this option.