

Expectations of Students in the Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility

Summary

UNSW is committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusiveness and the Faculty of Medicine & Health encourages applications from students with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds. This document has been developed to clarify expectations of UNSW Orientation and Mobility (**O&M**) students, with the aim of helping prospective applicants and students make informed decisions about future study and professional requirements.

Where there are disabilities that impact upon an individual's ability to meet these expectations, the University will provide reasonable adjustments via [Equitable Learning Services \(ELS\)](#). Reasonable adjustments are intended to assist a student to undertake the course or program on the same or similar basis as a student without the disability. Adjustments must be reasonable within the circumstances and cannot undermine the academic integrity of a course or program.

We expect that students will engage with their studies and apply themselves to achieve success. In addition to complying with UNSW policies and procedures, orientation and mobility students at UNSW are expected to act in a professional manner in learning environments and placements.

Clinical learning in simulated and Work Integrated Learning (**WIL**) environments is an essential component embedded across the UNSW O&M program. WIL placements take place with partner organisations and all students are required to comply with placement organisation policies.

In order to succeed in clinical learning, it is expected that students engage with clients, fellow students, teaching staff, O&M specialists and other health practitioners. Important areas of expectation are:

1. Legal, ethical and behavioural requirements.
2. Communication requirements (verbal, written and non-verbal).
3. Cognitive and intellectual requirements.
4. Sensory abilities.
5. Physical strength and mobility.
6. Sustainable performance.
7. Availability requirements.

Examples of expectations in these areas are provided below.

1. Legal, ethical and behavioural requirements

O&M specialists play a critical role in the provision of training and support to people of all ages who are blind or have low vision.

O&M specialists understand the role that independent movement plays in the overall growth and functioning of individuals with visual impairment and are dedicated to helping these individuals attain the maximum level of independence commensurate to their unique strengths, needs, abilities and preferences, and to receiving the services to which they are entitled. Alongside other professionals, O&M specialists develop and utilise specialised knowledge to accomplish this goal and advocate to protect the rights of the individuals served.

The practice of O&M is guided by:

- The Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (**OMAA**) Quality Framework documenting standards for O&M qualifications, certification and registration; ethical professional practice; professional development.
- The [OMAA Code of Ethics](#) identifies the ethical principles, responsibilities and commitments of the O&M profession in Australasia, to guide ethical decision-making and actions. The OMAA Code of Ethics should be used in conjunction with the [OMAA Standards of Practice](#).
- The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education (ACVREP) [COMS Code of Ethics](#) provides guidance for ethical practice but is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of every possible ethical or unethical behaviour.
- Orientation and Mobility students are also guided by the [UNSW Code of Conduct and Values](#)

O&M specialists are both responsible and accountable for ensuring professional and safe behaviour in all contexts.

Students enrolled in the UNSW O&M program are required to comply with these requirements. From a learning and development perspective during the course, this means that students will be required to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and compliance with relevant guidelines and scope of practice.
- Meet immunisation requirements as required by government and industry partners, including those introduced after the commencement of the program.
- Comply with WIL partner organisational requirements, including any requirements for a Working with Children Check (**WWCC**), criminal history check, National Disability Insurance Scheme Workers Check (**NDISWC**) and to abide by the immunisation, vaccination, and safety protocols from the relevant health authorities for students in training.
- Understand and appropriately manage ethical issues in both academic and clinical environments.
- Demonstrate self-awareness and ensure that your personal opinions, attitudes and behaviours do not adversely affect others.
- Comply with requirements relating to informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy with patient information in academic and clinical environments.

2. Communication requirements (verbal, written and non-verbal)

Effective communication is a core competency for an O&M specialist. Students are expected to:

- Communicate effectively, providing clear verbal instruction and direction in spoken English and comprehend spoken English delivered at conversational speed.
- Understand and respond to English verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Comprehend and communicate effectively in written English in a timely manner.
- Interpret non-verbal communication from others (within your sensory abilities) and respond appropriately with regard to the circumstances.
- Communicate respectfully regardless of gender, sex, sexuality, age, racial, cultural, religious, socio-economic and educational background.
- Demonstrate cultural competence, with the ability to gain rapport and work with a diverse group of people.



These communication requirements will normally involve spoken English for accreditation in Australia. This will be related to the minimum level of communication needed to allow a person to demonstrate the required competencies and safely provide support to someone who is blind or has low vision. If a student had a disability which affects their ability to communicate, or is from a non-English speaking background, UNSW will consider whether we are able to provide adjustments to allow the student to demonstrate the required competency, whilst also not sacrificing the integrity of the qualification and accreditation for use in Australia.

3. Cognitive and intellectual requirements

The role of an O&M specialist can be mentally challenging. O&M students are required to:

- Acquire knowledge, process information, analyse, think critically and synthesise information to apply theory to the practice of O&M.
- Utilise numeracy and literacy skills to solve problems which require several cognitive skills including focus, memory and have attention to detail.
- Demonstrate mental capacity to work constructively in diverse and changing academic and clinical environments, which may at times be challenging and unpredictable.
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence when working with clients, peers and supervisors.
- Demonstrate insight into your own performance and when working with others.

4. Sensory abilities

The practice of O&M may require advanced intuitive sensory abilities. As such, it is expected that students can:

- Accurately gather and interpret information provided through touch.
- Demonstrate adequate ability (with or without aids or other similar assistance) to comprehend information and instructions, and to respond accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Demonstrate adequate ability (with or without aids or similar assistance) to assess client appearance, behaviour, posture, movement and physical surroundings in a timely manner acceptable for client safety and learning.

5. Physical strength and mobility

O&M is a profession that is physically demanding and requires gross motor function, manual dexterity and fine motor skills.

Student practitioners are expected to be able to cater to clients' needs in WIL environments. Common scenarios that student practitioners are likely to encounter include:

- Remain balanced whilst walking over changes in ground surface/uneven ground and be able to provide support to a client whilst moving if needed.
- Walk up and down stairs without a handrail whilst balanced, so that a client who is blind or has low vision could safely take the side with the hand rail.
- Support clients in manoeuvring, entering and exiting public transport, including buses, trains, trams and ferries.
- Support clients in accessing and manoeuvring escalators.
- Accompany clients on walking routes they may need to familiarise themselves with, such as walking from their house to their employment or local shops. This may include repeating lengthy walks at a pace comfortable to the client.
- Support and teach clients to access and safely manoeuvre road or pathway crossings.
- Exercise critical thinking skills and physical agility to quickly assist clients where unexpected stimuli may arise. Student practitioners may be required to quicken in pace to alert a client to a risk on a road or pathway or skilfully reposition a client to prevent a fall.
- Develop a level of confidence when working under blindfold.

Student practitioners are expected to have a reasonable level of physical fitness so that they can support clients' mobility needs.

If you have concerns about meeting the physical or sustainable performance requirements due to a disability, please contact UNSW's [Equitable Learning Services \(ELS\)](#). Please also contact the program authority prior to beginning the program to discuss reasonable adjustments.

6. Sustainable performance

The practice of O&M can require consistent and sustained level of mental as well as physical performance over time. Therefore, it is expected that you can:

- Perform repetitive activities with a high level of concentration in an assigned period to provide safe and effective care.
- Undertake travel to clients, both as a student and a graduate, as this is likely to be required in order to support people who are blind or have low vision and require the kind of services and support provided by a student or graduate of a Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility).

7. Availability requirements:

Students will need to:

- Travel to Sydney for 4-5 weeks of compulsory techniques teaching as per set dates, with extra techniques training in home states as required.
- Commit to WIL primarily through T2 and T3 (which may take anywhere from 15 – 24 weeks).

Where possible, WIL placements may be in a student's home state. However, due to the limited availability of WIL placements in O&M, students may need to travel interstate for WIL placements and need to be prepared to travel within the state to see clients in various locations.

Support for students

This [website](#) details all the different services available including:

- [General wellbeing](#)
- [Feelings and mental health](#)
- [Sexual health and relationships](#)
- [Uni and life pressures](#)
- [Reporting harassment](#)
- [Educational adjustments](#)
- [Academic and study skills](#)
- [Special consideration](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community](#)
- [Legal and advocacy services](#)

Version dated 10 February 2025

