

***THE UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS  
EDUCATOR LICENSURE PROGRAM  
STUDENT HANDBOOK***



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UMassAmherst Outreach **University  
Without  
Walls**

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**FOR EDUCATOR LICENSURE PROGRAM  
STUDENTS ONLY**

**FALL 2007**

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# **THE UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS PROGRAM**

## **University Of Massachusetts Amherst**

### ***UWW Philosophy of Education***

At UWW we believe that learning is a basic human function that occurs throughout the life cycle. While in our program, you will have an opportunity to further develop a broad range of skills that are necessary for learning in any situation: the ability to understand what you read, hear and see; to write clearly and expressively; to think critically and objectively; and to pursue independent research. In addition you will develop a better understanding of your own background and your experiential learning.

UWW also believes in the importance of integrating theoretical learning with practical experience, and we try to view students within the wider context of their overall lives. Much of what you learn here will no doubt help you in your work life. Students find that studying, learning and completing a degree has a positive impact on many aspects of their lives for years to come.

### ***University and UWW Requirements***

To graduate from the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a degree from the University Without Walls, you must fulfill two sets of requirements, those of the University and those of the program. Further, to earn teacher licensure, you must fulfill School of Education and State Department of Education requirements. We represent the educational mission and standards of the University in seeing that you receive a general education spanning a variety of disciplines and that you build on that foundation a broad based study of the liberal arts which is necessary when working with young children. In addition, you may incorporate learning you have gained through experience.

### ***University Requirements***

1. **Total credits.** Completion of 120 credits, 45 of which must be residency credits. Of those 45 credits at least 15 must be graded.

Residency credit includes all credits earned through the prior learning portfolio, as well as all other coursework or independent studies taken through the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

2. **General education courses.**
  - a. **Writing:** two courses
    - i. college writing (CW) or an equivalent
    - ii. junior year writing, completed by taking UWW 370 *Writing About Experience*.
  - b. **Social world category:** six courses; at least two of these courses must have a cultural diversity designation—see below.
    - i. 2 arts and literature (AL or AT or I), of which one must be literature (AL)
    - ii. 1 historical studies (HS)
    - iii. 2 social and behavioral science (SB)
    - iv. 1 other course in the social world category or an interdisciplinary course (I)
  - c. **Biological and physical world**--three courses, at least one biological science (BS) and one physical science (PS); the third science may be BS, PS, or Science Interdisciplinary (SI).
  - d. **Analytical reasoning**
    - i. basic math (exam or course) (R1)
    - ii. 1 analytical reasoning (R2)
  - e. **Diversity**--one diversity class that focuses on diversity in the United States, designated by *U*; and one that focuses on global diversity, designated by *G*. The *U* and *G* designations may be combined with social world courses with designations like ALU, ALG, ATU, ATG, HSU, HSG, SBU, SBG, IU or IG.
3. **Interdisciplinary courses.** A student may substitute up to three interdisciplinary courses (I or SI) for some General Education requirements, except for CW, R1, and R2. Up to three 'I' courses may be substituted in the other areas, subject to the restriction that all students must take at least one course in each of the following: AL, HS, SB, BS, and PS. An 'I' course which has a social and cultural diversity designation (IU or IG) may be used to fulfill a diversity component. UWW 191G *Frameworks of Understanding* carries an interdisciplinary designation.

## ***UWW Requirements***

1. Completion of two three-credit introductory courses, UWW 191G *Frameworks of Understanding* and UWW 196Y *Degree Development Seminar*.
2. Approval of a degree plan that outlines the degree in Liberal Arts and Young Children's Learning.
3. Completion of the course of study outlined by the plan or with substitutions approved by the UWW advisor.
4. Completion of the junior year writing requirement, UWW 370 *Writing About Experience*, during which students develop a prior learning portfolio.
5. Completion of at least 15 credits of upper level course work (300 and above, not including independent studies or internships) in the concentration.
6. Completion of at least 45 credits within the concentration, including prior learning credits, if applicable.
7. Completion of a minimum of 15 UMass Amherst credits following matriculation in UWW when a student matriculates in the program with over 105 credits.

**NOTE:** In special circumstances, UWW students may petition for a variance to a specific UWW academic policy by addressing a letter to the Academic Matters Committee. The letter should clearly indicate the nature of the request and the reasons why you feel an exception is warranted. Before submitting the petition, discuss the possibility with your advisor, who can help you evaluate the strength of your case.

## ***UWW COURSES***

Because UWW views adult learners as people who have been and will be learning throughout their lives, our curriculum emphasizes the following two categories of skills that are crucial to any educational effort, whether inside the University or out:

**Communication skills**, including competence in expository or analytical writing, oral expression and/or audio and visual forms of communication, and

**Critical thinking**, including the ability to identify and critique the assumptions and values upon which arguments are based and conclusions premised, to gather and evaluate information, to make connections between seemingly unconnected thoughts or ideas, and to use these capabilities to address problems.

### ***Frameworks of Understanding (UWW 191G)***

Course Description: This course, which carries an interdisciplinary general education designation, is designed to develop the skills in critical thinking, analytical and reflective writing, and research necessary for the UWW student to design an individualized degree and to develop a prior learning portfolio. Course assignments will include readings about critical thinking and analytical writing as well as exercises and papers designed to apply the skills, particularly to the examination of experience. A portion of the course will be devoted to identifying and evaluating source materials for academic writing and then incorporating and documenting them in papers.

Goals: To help students:

- expand analytical reading and critical thinking skills;
- learn more about how theories are developed, how they are supported by evidence, and how they change (or do not change) in the face of new evidence;
- use different kinds of evidence to clarify thinking and to communicate ideas to others more effectively;
- explore ways to put personal experience in larger social, historical, and theoretical contexts;
- investigate different approaches to research and to develop research and organizing skills.

### ***Degree Development Seminar (UWW 196Y)***

Course Description: The *Degree Development Seminar* offers students a process to assist them in designing a degree that meets the requirements for licensure or for moving on to a master's degree program.

Goals: In addition to the development of an approved degree plan, the objectives of this course include:

- organizing one's learning by evaluating skills, identifying goals and developing strategies;
- formulating questions, seeking out information and drawing conclusions as a way to solve intellectual problems.

### ***Writing About Experience (UWW 370)***

Course Description: *Writing About Experience* is an advanced course designed to help students enhance their writing skills, using their own experience and reflections as the subject matter. The students enrolled in the course develop and revise a prior learning portfolio based on experiential learning that may later be evaluated for academic credit. Portfolios written in this course may be submitted for up to fifteen credits. Those seeking more credits may write an additional section or sections after the course is completed.

Details about the portfolio process are included within the *Prior Learning Assessment Handbook*.

*Writing About Experience* meets the University junior year writing requirement. The academic credits awarded for the prior learning portfolio are evaluated separately. Prerequisites: UWW 191G and UWW 196Y.

Goals: In addition to the creation of a prior learning portfolio, the course will also teach students to:

- develop organized and consistent themes throughout a longer piece of writing;
- integrate descriptive, analytical, and reflective writing;
- develop a voice in one's writing;
- respond to other's work with helpful comments and suggestions; and
- revise sections to create a coherent whole.

## ***THE DEGREE PLAN***

### ***Preparing Your Degree Plan***

The UWW degree plan includes:

- the title of your concentration;
- the rationale for the course of study in your concentration; and
- the listings of credited learning experiences already on the transcript and those yet to be taken to complete the degree.

Each of the above components should relate to the others, so that the degree plan represents a coherent course of study and meets the requirements of the University level baccalaureate degree.

Note: A total of no more than <b>24</b> credits will be accepted toward the UWW degree from prior learning assessment and special transcript evaluation.
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Remember to include department name and numbers from the schools at which the courses were taken (with UMass equivalents in parentheses *only* for those being transferred in with upper division numbers), short titles for independent studies, general education designation (if any), and UMass or transfer identification, and number of credits for each course or learning experience listed.

If you intend to submit a prior learning portfolio for credit, list the learning areas for which you hope to receive credit through the assessment process, as well as the specific experience on which the learning is based. List only those experiences that you expect to write about in some depth, usually no more than three or four.

### ***The Approved Degree Plan***

When the degree plan is ready for review, it is submitted to an academic review team. This team is responsible for reviewing and granting final approval of the degree plan. Once approved by advisor and the team, the degree plan is placed in your permanent file and serves as a guide for your subsequent semesters in the program.

## ***THE PRIOR LEARNING PORTFOLIO***

You have entered the University of Massachusetts Amherst with knowledge acquired through work and other life experiences. In the world outside the University classroom, you have acquired skills for organizing and interpreting important information. Developing a prior learning portfolio through UWW can help you accomplish the following:

- make intellectual contact with your theories, skills and understanding;
- clarify your thinking;
- find out what you know--and what you don't know--about your field;
- organize your ideas, your knowledge, and your skills in ways that allow you to communicate them more effectively to others;
- obtain university credit towards the completion of your degree; and
- satisfy the UWW degree requirements.

Because most students engaging in this process need a good deal of support and guidance, developing a portfolio is addressed in a separate handbook specifically about the prior learning assessment process. It is distributed through the *Writing About Experience* sections, but you can also download a copy from the UWW web site at [www.umass.edu/uww](http://www.umass.edu/uww) (click on *students* and look for the left menu item).

## **STEPS IN THE PROGRAM**

### ***The First Semester***

1. *Frameworks of Understanding.* Each new UWW student is required to take this course to refresh and further develop sometimes rusty skills in reading, writing, and thinking from a critical perspective, to gain an understanding of the various ways people learn, and to become engaged in a UWW learning community.
2. *Degree Development Seminar.* First semester ELP students also take this seminar in order to engage in a process to design a degree that meets the requirements for licensure or for moving on to a master's degree program.
3. *Regular Advising.* A UWW advisor will be assigned to you when you are accepted into UWW, and in most cases, will work with you until graduation. Advisors may meet with you in person or by phone appointments or answer questions through e-mail. Whatever the appropriate mode, someone at UWW will be able to guide you through the full requirements of completing a degree.

### ***The Second and Subsequent Semesters***

1. *Coursework.* Most ELP students are admitted to the program as part of a cohort, and will, for the most part, move through the program two courses each semester, each fall, spring and summer. Courses that fall under the School of Education requirements are needed for licensure. Courses that fall under the Subject Matter requirements comprise the liberal arts portion of the degree and focus on American studies necessary to teach across the curriculum in elementary school.

On occasion, students are unable, for scheduling or other reasons, to take one or more of the specific courses listed on the degree plan. The advisor (and, when appropriate, a School of Education faculty member) must approve all substitutions. In selecting substitutions, be sure that all key components of the concentration are well-represented as you pursue the degree.

2. *Final Submission of the Degree Plan.* Once the degree plan has been approved by the advisor and the UWW review team, the final plan is signed by the advisor and submitted to the SAS office. SAS enters the plan as approved on the UWW student records.
3. *Prior Learning Assessment.* ELP students entering in a fall semester will take *Writing About Experience* during the following spring semester, while those who enter in a spring semester will take the writing course during the next fall semester. This course, which satisfies the junior year writing requirement, results in a written portfolio that demonstrates learning gained from experience. Students

may submit the portfolio completed in the writing course for up to fifteen credits, but those seeking more credits will write additional material, either on their own or in another class, during the semester following the course. All portfolios must be submitted before the end of the semester following the course. The *Prior Learning Assessment Handbook* offers more details about the process.

4. Final Review and Awarding of Prior Learning Credits. When the prior learning portfolio is complete, students who wish to pursue credit for experiential learning meet with the advisor to discuss the approval process. Portfolios of 15 credits or fewer require approval and a credit award only from the advisor. Portfolios of 16-21 credits also require approval by the UWW academic review team. In addition, portfolios over 21 credits require approval by a non-UWW faculty member within the concentration.

Required Approval in the Prior Learning Assessment Process

	Advisor	Team	Faculty/Sponsor
Educator Licensure (to 15 cr)	X		
Educator Licensure (16-21 cr)	X	X	
Educator Licensure (21-30 cr)	X	X	X

5. University of Massachusetts School of Education (SOE) and State Department of Education (DOE) Requirements for Licensure. Students who have experience as paraprofessionals in public schools who wish to become licensed through the ELP to teach at the elementary or early childhood level in Massachusetts must meet the requirements for licensure of and be endorsed by the University of Massachusetts School of Education. Specific requirements are overseen by the Educator Licensure Office (ELO) at the SOE. Among these requirements are:
  - a. Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL exams). Early in the program, students will become familiar with the state examinations required for the level of educator licensure they are seeking. All licensure requires passing scores on the Communication and Literacy (C&L) exam. While passing this exam is not a requirement for graduation, it is required in order to be admitted to the UMass master’s degree program in elementary education (CTEP). It is also required, along with passing scores on the Foundations of Reading (FOR) and subject matter exams (either General Curriculum (GC) for elementary licensure or Early Childhood (EC) for early childhood licensure) in order to be allowed to do student teaching as part of the bachelor’s degree program. MTEL exams are offered by the State through National Evaluation Systems, Inc. Full details on the exams and registration information is available at [www.mtel.nesinc.com](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com)



from the instructor is required to register. Consult the undergraduate catalog on SPIRE for hints about format and whenever possible talk to students who have taken the courses. You may want to call or e-mail the instructor, review the syllabus if available, or speak with the department secretary or undergraduate advisor.

***Courses at other colleges or universities*** are often an important part of a UWW degree. Students taking courses at other colleges who plan to transfer the credit to UMass must check with their academic advisor ahead of time to determine whether or not the course is transferable to UMass. Once the course is completed, students request an official transcript be sent to UWW so that credits may be posted to your record here. Keep in mind that each semester while pursuing a UWW degree by taking courses at UMass Amherst or elsewhere, you will be charged the UWW program/semester fee on your UMass account. This fee will be added either during the semester in question or when a transcript is submitted for transfer purposes.

Remember that no more than 75 transfer credits may be counted toward the required 120 graduation credits at UMass. Transfer credit includes courses taken at other colleges, special transcript credit, and CLEP exam credit. It does not include credits earned through the prior learning assessment process. All credits accepted by UMass Amherst from other institutions will appear on the University transcript, but however many transferred in, students must have a minimum of 45 UMass Amherst residency credits.

***Prior learning assessment*** refers to the process by which UWW awards UMass credit for past learning gained outside the structure of formal education.

***Independent learning contracts*** help students pursue credited learning under the supervision of a faculty member outside the classroom. The student proposes the contract and outlines learning goals and activities to be undertaken to meet those goals. The crediting faculty member helps to sharpen those goals, to decide on learning activities, and to choose a means of evaluation. The UWW advisor may help decide on the number of credits and suggest alternatives where appropriate. At the end of the semester, the faculty member submits the grade to the UWW advisor if the student is enrolled under a UWW course number. Learning contracts may be done in a variety of formats, for example:

- ***Independent studies*** provide a vehicle for pursuing research, reading and writing projects outside a traditional course format. While students occasionally – with a faculty member's permission – use them as a way to do regular University courses they otherwise couldn't attend, more often they are used to investigate questions and subject matters not covered by courses in the Continuing & Professional Education or University catalog. They may also be used to structure a program of directed readings covering essential literature in a field of study.

- **Practica** are based on learning contracts directed towards hands-on experiential learning to extend and broaden one's experience in a field. A practicum may involve an exploration of a field through interviews and observation in various settings, or creative work in the arts, or other personal projects.
- **Internships** are also directed towards experiential learning and typically involve learning projects pursued within an organizational setting. While students sometimes pursue internships in the context of current job responsibilities, their focus must be on *new* learning. Often an on-site supervisor will be involved in structuring and evaluating the student's learning. Internships are useful ways to apply theory in the field and bring the depth of experience to one's learning.

**Special transcript evaluation** assigns transfer credit to trainings, workshops, and courses conducted outside of an accredited college environment. Many UWW students have participated in workplace trainings related to their concentrations. With proper documentation (official verification of topic, dates, completion, and contact hours), college-level trainings are usually awarded one credit for each sixteen verified contact hours.

**CLEP exams** test college-level learning in a variety of subject areas, offering an option for a less expensive and faster way to demonstrate independent learning and earn college credit. Certain general education requirements may be fulfilled through CLEP exams, which are administered by the College Board ([www.collegeboard.com/CLEP](http://www.collegeboard.com/CLEP)) and are included on the transcript as *transfer* credit.

## **GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR UWW PROGRAM**

This section covers information about some people and resources that help make the UWW program and process a rich experience instead of a mere credential. Drawing on the expertise of faculty, staff, and fellow learners in UWW and the University will help you to avoid common pitfalls, such as:

- taking too many credits in the first semester and feeling overwhelmed;
- finding yourself either over- or under-qualified for certain courses;
- finding yourself falling behind in an online course;
- accumulating a number of incompletes;
- getting nowhere in an ill-defined independent study and then floundering;
- finding yourself missing a requirement at the point of graduation.

## ***Helpful People and Resources***

UWW Advisor: Your advisor will communicate with you in person, by phone, or by e-mail as needed in the first semester when you are developing a degree plan. After that, you should contact your advisor at least in the beginning of the semester. Your advisor is a key figure in your development as an independent learner as she or he offers encouragement, helps you clarify academic goals, and assists you in designing a plan to meet these goals. To aid you in the process, your advisor will also:

- suggest appropriate courses or learning activities;
- help you design independent studies when appropriate;
- guide you through and help you master the University's administrative processes;
- assist you in the clarification of learning areas within your prior learning;
- suggest a range of credit for the prior learning award;
- present your degree plan and prior learning portfolio to an academic review team;
- help review your degree requirements in preparation for graduation.

It is important that you take some initiative in seeing your advisor and in keeping her or him informed about changes in your plans, such as adding or dropping courses, changing addresses, or dropping out for a semester. At UWW we can usually find a remedy for most of the administrative problems that arise, but the solution must be carried out by the student correctly, with all the right forms in the right places at the right time.

Fellow Learners: Your fellow students can be extremely helpful in:

- suggesting good courses;
- sharing their degree planning and prior learning experience with you;
- helping with the logistics of going back to college (setting up car pools, arranging for childcare, etc.);
- offering support and encouragement.

Web sites: All University departments and offices have comprehensive web sites packed with useful information. Often you can resolve an issue or answer a question in less time by first consulting the printed materials on the web or downloading needed forms. Then you can better focus the time you spend with advisors and faculty. The UMass web site is at [www.umass.edu](http://www.umass.edu) and from there you can use the menus or search feature to find what you need.

## ***Places to Go For Help***

***Campus Career Network*** ([www.umass.edu/careers/](http://www.umass.edu/careers/)) provides personal and career counseling, vocational and other testing, a career library, and short-term (three-session) workshops on a variety of topics of importance to students. They will help you set up a placement file, write a resume, schedule job interviews, and other activities associated

with turning your learning into a livelihood. For a list of services and workshop topics, call 413-545-2224.

**Learning Commons** ([www.umass.edu/learningcommons](http://www.umass.edu/learningcommons)) located on the lower level of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library, provides a full range of academic support services to all students. Call them at 413- 577-1272. In addition, the DuBois Library offers quiet study areas on the second and third floors with WiFi access, and other research and study areas on various floors for individual and small group work.

**UMass Amherst Disabilities Services** (<http://www.umass.edu/disability>) located in 231 Whitmore, is dedicated to helping those with learning and other disabilities attend the University successfully. The Disability Services office is a starting point for testing for a learning disability, for registering for sign language interpreters, and for obtaining other services. Their number is 413-545-0892 (V/TTY).

**Committee on Admissions and Records and General Education Variance Committee:** These two committees appointed by the Faculty Senate act as boards of appeals for such petitions as reinstatements after dismissal, retroactive withdrawal from prior semesters because of illness or other extenuating circumstances, acceptance of an alternative course to meet a general education requirement, and so on. UWW students should consult with the UWW advisor about whether their requests are appropriate for these committees to consider. The UWW Director or Associate Director will write a letter of support if they consider the case substantive. More information about these committees and other academic regulations is available in the *Academic Regulations* posted on the Registrar's ([www.umass.edu/registrar](http://www.umass.edu/registrar)) and Dean of Students ([www.umass.edu/dean\\_students](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students)) sites.

**Ombud's Office** ([www.umass.edu/ombuds\\_office](http://www.umass.edu/ombuds_office)) located in room 823 Campus Center, will intercede for students who have encountered bureaucratic or academic problems for which they feel they have not obtained an equitable solution. Their number is 413-545-0867.

**The Everywoman's Center** ([www.umass.edu/ewc](http://www.umass.edu/ewc)) located on the second floor of Wilder Hall, is a place where women can receive quality services, share information, support each other, and work together in a comfortable multicultural environment. The mission of EWC is to provide leadership in promoting educational access and equity for women in higher education. The program's services are offered to students, faculty, staff, and community women. Their number is 413-545-0883.

**Web Sites** to bookmark or set as favorites:

UMass Amherst Home Page	<a href="http://www.umass.edu">www.umass.edu</a>
UWW Home Page	<a href="http://www.umass.edu/uww">www.umass.edu/uww</a>
UMass Amherst Continuing & Professional Education	<a href="http://www.umassulearn.net">www.umassulearn.net</a>
UMass Online	<a href="http://www.umassonline.net">www.umassonline.net</a>
UMass Amherst Financial Aid Office	<a href="http://www.umass.edu/umfa">www.umass.edu/umfa</a>