

CVR 8210 VISUAL HEALTH AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Course Catalog Description

Introduction to international cooperation in the vision care field. World inequalities. Definition of Sustainable Development. Contextualization of visual health importance in the economic, political and social world while pioneering a type of cooperation and a view toward the need for public health research that acts as a tool against current injustices, subsequently strengthening our responsibility for collaborating in this development as health care providers and researchers. **(12-3-0)**

This course in Visual Health and Development was originally developed by the UNESCO Chair in Visual Health and Development as an elective course for optometry, ophthalmology and optics schools and colleges. The idea was to give eye care professional students an overview of international health and what is development, and what is international cooperation for development. Those students who might be interested in international health and would like further studies could pursue a post graduate degree (in Public Health, International Studies, Cooperation for Development, Health Policy, Population Health and other areas) to build competencies and be qualified to work in the international arena with respect to visual health.

The course has been successfully delivered to students at optometry schools throughout Spain since 2002. It was originally designed for live in-classroom delivery, but at the Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (UPC) in Barcelona, Spain, 2006 marks the first time it has been delivered on line in the Catalan language and in the Spring 2007, the course was delivered online to leaders of VOSH (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity). In 2004, the Chair embarked on a project to expand delivery of this course to other countries. In 2004, optometry professors from 15 North American universities were trained to deliver the course from the Associated Center at NSU in Fort Lauderdale, USA. In 2005, optometry professors from across Latin America were trained at the Central American Associated Center in El Salvador. In 2006, a professor from that session, Dr. Daniel Valverde, worked with the Chair and trained other professors from ophthalmology and optometry and optometric technician programs from South America. Also in 2006 in Milan Italy, optometry professors from all corners of the world, especially Africa and Europe took part in Train the Trainers sessions about this course material. Many of these schools have fully incorporated the course into their curricula, and others have taken parts of the course, or concepts from the course, and taught them in association with core courses, such as public health. During this process, many of the trainer/trainees, who are also active in their professional associations, expressed that this course helped them personally to better understand the development process, and to better understand how they could interact internationally to develop better services for visual health, to establish programs of visual health in their countries, and to think outside their own professions to solve the issues surrounding visual health.

As professionals who are interested in research and in light of the global importance of blindness and the role visual health plays in the development process and the need for further vision research especially in visual health in developing countries, it is my hope as your course facilitator, that you too will become trainers and hopefully researchers in this area, and through this course, you too can gain a new understanding of Development, and how we as providers/professionals can assist in this development process, and how careful research is needed to provide an evidence base to what we do in public health and international eye care.

My hope is that through this course, you will begin to consider the basic definitions for Development as well as the measures utilized for Development, and begin to consider how your personal career path might influence the growing body of research in Visual Health and Development.