



BERGIN UNIVERSITY of CANINE STUDIES

Frequently Asked Questions

I am interested in learning about canine studies, what programs does your school offer?

We are the only school in the world teaching service dog training. The AS degree in Assistance Dog Education is focused on vocations in assistance dog training and the AS in Business and Companion Dog Studies is focused on scent detection, hunting, and other working and recreational dog programs. The strongest dog training knowledge would come from one of the AS degree programs.

Upper degree courses move well beyond the focus of producing a trained dog, to incorporate cognitive, psychological, sociological and historical perspectives of the dog including using art, literature and genetics as prisms from which the canine is viewed.

The only certificate program that really teaches you how to train dogs is the six weeks Service Dog Seminar, and you will need more practice with dogs upon graduation.

The High Schooled Assistance Dog certificate program teaches you about working with teens at-risk and it is an optional add-on course with the Service Dog Seminar certificate and the A.S. of A.D.E. program. The more you know about dog training, the more the kids respond and trust the your methods. First you learn how to train assistance dogs, then you teach teens at risk how to train assistance dogs which helps raise the teens' self-esteem and teaches them emotional self-control.

If you are looking for paid employment in the dog industry, the A.S. in Business and Companion Dog Studies is an eight-month program designed to educate students about dog training in working and recreational dog training areas.

The Social/Therapy Course certificate is intended to prepare someone to take their own dogs out to visit schools, nursing homes and other places in which dogs can bring cheer.

I have a question about the Cynology degree. The Associate's degree teaches you to train dogs and gets you into the business world, and the Master's teaches you to develop a new training program for dogs. Where does the Bachelor's degree fit in that?

The Bachelor of Science - Cynology is a comprehensive look at the dog using a multi-disciplinary approach. Dogs in art, literature, research, history, furthering training knowledge, etc., communication skills, critical thinking skills, ethical thought are also part of the curriculum.

Can you give me any insight into how much time and energy I would be devoting to attending the Master's program and how much time I would have to focus on my business/work?

That is a very good question because our Master's sessions are a bit different than many schools in that our on-campus sessions are offered two-three times a year for one-two weeks at a time. The sessions are usually offered in February and August and often in May; the schedule depends upon where you are in the program. The program is expected to be completed within two years.

We estimate that you may devote about twenty hours in the month after each session to read and do assignments. Then the next session usually starts about five months later. Some instructors will give you a reading assignment before their class starts and you need to consider the time needed complete that assignment.

What is the student - to - instructor ratio for the class? What is your teaching method? How old are your students?

Generally the ratio is one instructor for every eight to ten students. Our courses are both lecture and lab and are unique to this field of study. Our students vary in age, anywhere from early twenties to late sixties.

We start training pups at 3 1/2 weeks of age in order that responses are positively reinforced and thus embedded than if taught at a later age.

Our methods are primarily cognitive teaching (focusing on the mind) with some classical conditioning, not operant training. We teach through positive reinforcement.

We use verbal markers, luring, targeting and some problem solving and insight learning methods. No leash corrections are used, in fact dogs are almost always in harnesses. No e-collars, no pinch collars and no choke chains are used.

I would like to know what classes I need to take to get an Associates degree?

For our degree program you will need to have completed your general education requirements at an accredited school and transfer these credits to our University. All the requirements are described in the catalog and are easy to understand. After you submit your application with your official transcripts, we review the credits to determine if the general education requirements have been met. If not, we will suggest what courses you would need to take as described in the catalog's general education requirements section.

According to what I've read, if I'm interested in learning how to train service dogs...the program I should be looking at is the Associate Degree in Assistance Dog Education. Is that correct?

Yes. The Associate of Science Degree is focused on vocational knowledge that will help a graduate start a program or be hired by an assistance dog program.

I already have a B.S., would I be able to transfer those credits for the A.S degree (if that is the correct program?)

Most likely your credits would transfer if the degree were from an accredited college. You might be interested to know that several of our Master's students have taken the summer Service Dog Training Seminar, followed by enrolling in the Master's in the Fall. This choice of study depends on whether you plan to do a basic service dog program (then the Associate degree program is best suited to that goal) or if you intend to create a new and different, "original" type of service dog program (then the Master's would be best suited to that goal.)

When I was reading the requirements for the Master's program it mentioned that I needed a dog. I currently have two dogs - would I be able to use one of them as a dog to train? Or I would have to get a puppy?

In the Master of Science degree program you provide your own dog when you train at home. As part of your Master's project, you must train a dog to do a task. When you are on campus for the Master's session we will provide one of our dogs for you to train.

I was wondering if you would be able to tell me: is service dog training something I could learn by attending the Master's program or a certificate course? I read about the certificate for the Service Dog Training Seminar that is 6 weeks long, are other training courses covered more in the Master's program?

Basically I want to know if I'm interested in the right program--or if I have to do both the Associate and the Master's! Under "expected learning outcomes" for the M.S. degree it says that we should be able to "design and implement training programs for humans and canines"-- does this include service dog classes (i.e. would I be able to teach somebody how to train a dog to become a service dog)?

The Master's degree program has the top canine scientists from all over the U.S. as instructors and the subjects vary from *cognition to emotion to actual training*. The Master's program requires you to do an "original" project or thesis, not replicate what has already been done. Most Master's students who are interested in this direction take the Service Dog Seminar prior to taking the Master's to combine that knowledge in order to create an original project. The Master's is about doing something that has never been done before involving dogs.

If you are interested in how to train service dogs and working in a service dog program or starting your own program, then the eight-month Associate of Science degree in Assistance Dog Education would help you reach this goal because it is vocationally oriented.

Do many people get the associate's degree and then go on for a bachelor degree?

Since the Associate programs are vocationally oriented, and students are expected to complete the program and move into the job market, only a percentage of students graduating from the Associate programs take the Bachelor's program. We encourage students to continue with their education because we believe the more knowledge about dogs that people have, the more change will be brought to the world in terms of kinder treatment and more respect towards dogs.

I'd like to get more details on the curriculum for the seminar - are courses covered in the seminar included in the "Course Descriptions" section of the catalog? Who takes the summer seminar?

Often people who take the summer seminar are already working at or poised to be hired at a canine service dog program. The seminar is a short course and thus not nearly as in-depth as the University programs.

The first two weeks you are in a wheelchair learning the handling skills individuals with disabilities are taught. The last two weeks, you teach those same skills to individuals with

disabilities. The mid-two-weeks, classes in service dog training, disability studies, breeding, puppy training, social/therapy dog training, dog psychology, etc., are taught. The difference is that instead of a full three-unit college course, topics are taught in two-four hours.

If I take the Service Dog Seminar will I be ready to be a service dog trainer?

The seminar is only six weeks, and thus does not fully prepare someone to start a program. The AS degree in Assistance Dog Education which is eight months long, provides much more thorough preparation.

Most students who participate in the summer seminar already are working in the dog field and want to improve their training skills. We suggest to seminar students that when they complete the seminar, that they get some neighbor dogs or personal dogs, and experiment on the techniques taught in the seminar before training actual service dogs. Many of our seminar graduates have started their own programs based on what they learned at the seminar however care must be taken not to overload oneself, to take it one dog/client placement at a time rather than several clients and dogs at a time.

I have a disability and I am considering taking the Service Dog Seminar, would I be successful at this course?

We've had a number of people with disabilities and service dogs take the seminar and they were able to meet the physical requirements of the program. Once your education requirements are met for the seminar, then you would need to consider how you would manage the coursework.

The course is physically demanding. Learning and applying the motor skills required in training dogs includes being able to physically handle and train the dogs assigned to you

(without physical assistance). The first two weeks are rigorous as our dogs and our students are physically connected day and night for seven days and nights.

In the second two weeks our seminar students are given a string of dogs to train; the dogs range in age from puppies to teens to adults. Students are expected to take these dogs on outings with them and home evenings and weekends. Ensuring that the dogs are safe, learn no bad behaviors and are trained to the school's specifications is a requirement.

Each student in the course is limited to handling one dog at a time. As a result, students with service dogs usually leave their own dogs at home for the six weeks or find someone in the University's geographic area to care for their dog.

If you need your own service dog with you then an option to participate in the seminar is to audit the course. Auditing the seminar would preclude you from being part of the student-teacher teams placing service dogs with individuals with disabilities during last two weeks of the six-week course. However, you could train with your own dog during the training sessions held the mid-two weeks.

You will need to include information about your ability to physically handle and train dogs of differing ages and abilities in your letter of interest with your application.