

Optometry Information

CAREER DESCRIPTION

Doctors of Optometry (ODs) are the primary health care professionals for the eye. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat, and manage diseases, injuries, and disorders of the visual system, the eye, and associated structures. They also identify related systemic conditions affecting the eye.

ODs diagnose and treat, prescribe medications, perform certain surgical procedures, provide vision therapy and low vision rehabilitation, and assist patients with glasses and contact lenses. They counsel patients regarding surgical and non-surgical options to meet their visual needs, and in cases involving surgery they provide both pre-operative and post-operative consultation and care. ODs also diagnose systemic conditions that have eye related symptoms (i.e. diabetes or high blood pressure) and refer patients to other health practitioners, as needed.

Optometrists typically work in clean, well-lit, and comfortable settings, usually in their own offices. Most full-time optometrists work about 40 hours a week; many now work Saturdays and evenings to suit the needs of their patients. Emergency calls, though not common, have increased with the passage of therapeutic drug laws expanding optometrists' ability to prescribe medications.

ACADEMIC FACTORS FOR OPTOMETRY SCHOOL ADMISSION

- **GPA:** Both your cumulative GPA and science GPA (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) are an important part of your application.
- **OAT Scores:** The OAT (Optometry Admission Test) measures general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. While all optometry schools require applicants to take the OAT, test results are only one factor considered in evaluating the potential of an applicant. The test covers biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, reading comprehension, quantitative reasoning, and physics. Ideally, the OAT is taken the year you apply to optometry school. It is scored on a scale from 200 to 400, the national median score being 300.
- **Prerequisite Courses:** There is no preferred major that optometry schools look for, but each school has specified prerequisite courses that students must complete before attending optometry school. We recommend that students choose a major that interests them and then make sure to also complete the prerequisite courses for the optometry schools they plan on applying to. Optometry schools make the required prerequisites readily available on their school websites.

NON-ACADEMIC FACTORS FOR OPTOMETRY SCHOOL ADMISSION

Optometry schools are looking for “well-rounded” candidates who have achieved not only in the classroom but also in other areas. Leadership ability, a disposition to serve others, and a work ethic characterized by dedication and persistence are a few of the qualities that impress most admission committees.

- **Shadowing Experience:** You should become acquainted with a few optometrists and shadow to gain some firsthand experience in what they do on a daily basis. To be competitive, try to obtain at least 100 shadowing hours, preferably from at least three optometrists and in at least 2 different settings.
- **Community Service:** Emphasis on service varies, but it is recommended to have a history of service, approximately 50+ hours per year. Service activities should demonstrate consistent and long term commitment to helping others, but do not need to be optometry related. Community service (teaching English classes, humanitarian service projects, etc.) completed on a mission counts as a starting point, but engagement in your own community can be seen as more valuable and should demonstrate a more current pattern of service.
- **Leadership:** Most students are able to accrue leadership experience over the years as they are involved in working, service, and extracurricular activities.
- **Research:** Research experience can be a great bonus to your application, especially if you apply to more research-oriented schools. However, most schools do not require research experience.

COURSES RECOMMENDED FOR OAT PREPARATION

*Since each school may have slightly different admissions criteria, you should investigate all the schools and colleges you are interested in applying to. A complete listing of the schools and colleges of optometry is provided by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) at www.optometriceducation.org or www.optomcas.org.

BIOLOGY

CELLBIO 120: Science of Biology	3.0 hrs
OR	
MMBIO 121 & 122: General Biology (only take MMBio 122 if need lab credit) (BIO 130, if required by your major)	3.0/1.0 hrs
MMBIO 221/222: Microbiology (only take MMBIO 222 if need lab credit)	3.0/1.0 hrs
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CELLBIO 220: Human Anatomy & Lab	4.0 hrs
CELLBIO 305: Human Physiology (pre-req is CELL 220) or CELL 362 (if required by your major)	4.0 hrs
CELLBIO 363: Adv Physiology Lab (if needed)	1.0 hrs

PHYSICS

PHSCS 105 & 107: General Physics I & Lab	3.0, 1.0 hrs
PHSCS 106 & 108: General Physics II & Lab (PHSCS 121, 123, if required by your major)	3.0, 1.0 hrs
<small>*Labs are not always required for optometry schools; check individual school pre-reqs to determine if you need physics labs</small>	

CHEMISTRY

CHEM 105: General College Chemistry I	4.0 hrs
CHEM 106 & 107: General College Chemistry II	3.0, 1.0 hrs
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CHEM 351: Organic Chemistry I	3.0 hrs
CHEM 352 & 353: Organic Chemistry II & Lab	3.0, 2.0 hrs

BIOCHEMISTRY

CHEM 481: Biochemistry	3.0 hrs
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STATISTICS

STAT 121: Principles of Statistics	3.0 hrs
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CALCULUS

MATH 112: Calculus	4.0 hrs
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PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCH 111: General Psychology <small>*Some schools require additional psychology classes</small>	3.0 hrs
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APPLICATION PROCESS

Using OptomCAS (the Optometry Centralized Application Service), you can fill out one application and send it to multiple optometry programs. All schools and colleges of optometry participate. Most schools require an application, personal essay, transcripts, an OAT score; letters of recommendation, a personal interview; and demonstrated experience or exposure to the field of optometry.

OTHER RESOURCES

- The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry – <https://optometriceducation.org/>
- National Board of Examiners in Optometry – www.optometry.org/
- Optometry Career Guide – <https://futureeyedoc.org/>
- Optometry Centralized Application Service – www.optomcas.org/
- Explore Health Careers – www.explorehealthcareers.org