

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.

The average salary of optometrists is around \$103,900 per year (www.bls.gov). Almost all optometrists 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. On a 4.0 scale, the average accepted GPA for the 2015 entering optometry classes was 3.45.
- *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. The average accepted OAT score for the 2015 entering optometry class was 324.
- *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 prerequisite readily available on their school websites.

Courses Recommended for OAT Preparation and Commonly Required for Optometry School Matriculation

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.opted.org or www.optomcas.org.

*Below is a **sample** of common prerequisite courses. We strongly recommend you check with the institutions you plan to apply to in order to make sure you meet all of the class requirements.

Psychology

PSYCH 111 General Psychology

Statistics

STAT 121 Principles of Statistics

Calculus

MATH 112 Calculus

Biology

BIO 130 Science of Biology
 PDBIO 220 Human Anatomy & Lab
 PDBIO 305 Human Physiology
or PDBIO 362 (if required by your major)
 PDBIO 363 Human Physiology Lab

Microbiology

MMBIO 221/222 General Microbiology/Lab

Physics

PHSCS 105/107 General Physics I/Lab
 PHSCS 106/108 General Physics II/Lab
or PHSCS 121/123 (if required by your major)

General or Inorganic Chemistry

CHEM 105 General College Chemistry
 CHEM 106/107 General Chemistry II/Lab

Organic and/or Biochemistry

CHEM 351 Organic Chemistry I
 CHEM 352/353 Organic Chemistry II/Lab
 CHEM 481 Biochemistry

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 two 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.

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

- Preview of Optometry (STDEV 273) – 1-credit course offered at BYU as an overview of the profession of optometry as well as preparation for optometry school
- The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry – www.opted.org/info_faqs.cfm
- National Board of Examiners in Optometry – www.optometry.org/
- Optometry Career Guide – www.opted.org/pdf/eyes_career_guide.pdf
- Optometry Centralized Application Service – www.optomcas.org/
- Explore Health Careers – www.explorehealthcareers.org