



# Pre-Optometry

Optometrists 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 as well as identify related systemic conditions affecting the eye. Doctors of Optometry prescribe medications, low vision rehabilitation, vision therapy, spectacle lenses, contact lenses, and perform certain surgical procedures. Optometrists counsel their patients regarding surgical and non-surgical options that meet their visual needs related to their occupations and lifestyle. They treat eye diseases such as glaucoma and ulcers; visual skill problems such as the inability to move, align, fixate and focus the eye; and clarity problems such as simple near or farsightedness or complications due to the aging process, disease, accident, or malfunction.

## Taking the Right Classes

Preparing to apply to optometry school is somewhat similar to preparing for optometry school. A baccalaureate degree is required for most campuses, however, you are able to apply in your last year of undergraduate study provided that all of the prerequisite course work is complete and the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) has been taken.

### Pre-Optometry Course Requirements for Most Schools

1 year of English	ENGL G100 + 110
1 year of chemistry (with laboratory)	CHEM G180 + G185
1 semester of organic chemistry (with laboratory)	CHEM G220
1 year of biology (with laboratory)	BIOL G180 + G182
1 year of physics (with laboratory)	PHYS G120 + G125 or PHYS G185 + G280
1 semester of human anatomy	BIOL G220 <sup>1</sup>
1 semester of human physiology	BIOL G225 <sup>1</sup>
1 semester of microbiology (with laboratory)	BIOL G210
1 semester of Psychology	PSYC G100 (or G100H)
1 semester of statistics	MATH G160
1 semester of Calculus	MATH G180
1 quarter/semester of biochemistry	Upper Division Course: Taken at University
1 quarter/semester of immunology	Upper Division Course: Taken at University
<sup>1</sup> Not required for Western University, but highly recommended. AP credit allowed for first English and Calculus only at both Western University and Ketchum University	

## Choosing the Best Major

What is the best major for pre-optometry students? The answer is: there is no best major. Choose a major that you find most interesting, challenging and satisfying. You should study subjects that you really enjoy, and avoid choosing a major because it might "look good" on your application. No points are given for the major that you choose, however, you will probably perform better in a major that captures your interests.

Many students choose to major in the biological sciences because the requirements for a biology degree are very similar to optometry school admission requirements. If you decide to pursue a non-science major, then your strong performance in the pre-optometry requirements will be crucial.

## Important for Community College Students:

If you complete all of your pre-optometry requirements at community college, it will be in your best interest to take several upper-division science classes at the four-year institution to which you transfer. Performing well in upper-division science courses further demonstrates your ability to handle the rigorous science-based coursework found in optometry school. If you are not a science major, it may still be important for you to take additional science courses beyond the minimum requirements to further support application to optometry school. *Also note that some optometry colleges will disallow community college coursework for fulfilling prerequisites after a bachelor's degree has been earned.*

## **OAT Preparation**

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is prepared and administered by the Optometry Admission Testing Program at the direction of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry. The OAT is now available only online. Testing is available year round and an examinee can select the date, time, and place to test. In addition, examinees receive their scores immediately after the completion of the test at the test center.

The Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) is being offered as a computerized test at Prometric Testing Centers, [www.2test.com](http://www.2test.com), located in the United States as well as Canada. You will be allowed to take the exam an unlimited number of times, but must wait at least 90 days between testing dates. The OAT must be completed by March 15 of each admissions season.

## **Optometry School Application Process**

1. Meet minimum Requirements: A Bachelor's degree for all applicants, prerequisite coursework, OAT scores (within 3 years of application).
2. Apply to universities (OAT scores included). Those deemed competitive are asked to complete a supplemental application with additional information and documentation. Includes answering essay questions, providing letters of recommendation, resume, etc.
3. Be invited to interview with selected university committees
4. Get a letter of "Acceptance", "Denial", or "Waitlist"
5. Matriculate to the university of choice where final acceptance was granted.

## **Optometry Schools:**

There are over 20 Optometry schools in the U.S. (<http://www.opted.org/about-asco/member-schools-and-colleges>)

There are three Optometry Schools in California

UC Berkeley: <http://optometry.berkeley.edu/>

Marshall B. Ketchum University (formerly Southern California College of Optometry:

<http://www.ketchum.edu/index.php/admissions/od> Avg GPA: 3.5 / 3.29 Prereqs

Western University: <http://prospective.westernu.edu/optometry/welcome> Avg GPA: 3.21 / 3.21 Prereqs

## **Degrees Offered:** Doctor of Optometry (OD)

The Doctor of Optometry degree is a 4-year program. Optometry programs include classroom and laboratory study of health and visual sciences, as well as clinical training in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders. Included are courses in pharmacology, optics, vision science, biochemistry, and systemic disease. Residencies are not required to develop a specialty.

**Dual Degrees:** Some campuses will offer joint degrees along with the OD, including a research Ph.D.; Masters in Public Health (MPH)

**Minimum GPA** required for applying is 3.00

**Average GPA** for admission to Optometry Schools: 3.2 – 3.5

**Residency Status:** US citizen or permanent resident (permanent residents must be in possession of their resident alien card at time of application)

**Median Income:** \$94,990

## **Additional Resources:**

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry: <http://www.opted.org/about-asco/member-schools-and-colleges/>