Optometry: Exploring the Profession

Overview
Optometrists diagnose, manage, and treat conditions of the human eye and visual system.

Typical Duties:
→ Examine eyes, using observation, instruments and pharmaceutical agents, to determine visual acuity and perception, focus and coordination and to diagnose diseases and other abnormalities such as glaucoma or color blindness
→ Prescribe medications to treat eye diseases if state laws permit
→ Prescribe, supply, fit and adjust eyeglasses, contact lenses and other vision aids
→ Analyze test results and develop a treatment plan
→ Educate and counsel patients on contact lens care, visual hygiene, lighting arrangements and safety factors
→ Remove foreign bodies from the eye
→ Consult with and refer patients to ophthalmologist or other health care practitioner if additional medical treatment is determined necessary
→ Provide patients undergoing eye surgeries, laser vision correction, with pre- and post-operative care
→ Prescribe therapeutic procedures to correct or conserve vision
→ Provide vision therapy and low vision rehabilitation

2016 median salary was $106,140 and employment is expected to grow 27% by 2024!

Education Programs
Optometrists need a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree. In 2017, there were 23 accredited Doctor of Optometry programs in the United States. Doctor of Optometry programs take 4 years to complete. After finishing the O.D., some optometrists do a 1-year residency program to get advanced clinical training in a specialty. Specialty areas for residency programs include family practice, primary eye care, pediatric or geriatric optometry, vision therapy and rehabilitation, cornea and contact lenses, refractive and ocular surgery, low vision rehabilitation, ocular disease, and community health optometry.

Each program’s requirements and deadlines vary. Please consult specific websites for details. For a directory of programs, click here.

It’s never too early to start! Make an appointment with Sara Harp, Assistant Director for Pre-Health and STEM Professions in order to find out more and create plans for your goals.

To make an appointment, go online via Handshake, call 740-587-6656 or stop by Burton Morgan 306.

Admission Requirements: Knowledge and Strategies
Work with your faculty advisor to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution’s individual website for specific requirements!

Typical prerequisites include:
→ Biology with lab
→ General chemistry with lab
→ Organic chemistry with lab
→ English
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- General Physics
- Calculus and/or statistics
- Psychology
- Human Anatomy and Physiology
- Biochemistry

**Note:** Some schools may require additional or specific coursework. Check each program individually to ensure your coursework meets the program requirements! Consult the [Prerequisite Chart](#) for additional information.

Prepare for and take [The Optometry Admission Test (OAT)](#)
- It is recommended that you take the test at least one year before you want to go to optometry school.
- Content tested on the OAT:
  - Survey of the Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry)
  - Reading Comprehension
  - Physics
  - Quantitative Reasoning

Admissions is based on holistic review, involving factors beyond OAT scores and GPA such as:
- Exposure to optometry
- Research experience
- Leadership and Involvement
- Employment
- Volunteer experiences

**Additional Tips:**
- Perform strong academically. The average GPA of the 2016 entering class was 3.42
- Build relationships; create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember, such connections can open up opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply.
  - Some Optometry programs require a letter of recommendation from a professional Optometrist. To see what each school requires for letters of recommendation, [click here](#).
- When you submit an application, remember you will do so through a centralized application form: Optometry's Centralized Application Service, [OptomCAS](#).
- Plan financially: there is a [cost](#) associated with taking the OAT and applying to schools

**Additional Resources:** [Association of Colleges and Schools of Optometry](#)