

Optometry

Health Professions Advising Office (HPAO), Student Access to Science Center, FO5-109

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Nature of the Work, Earnings and Occupational Outlook

The American Optometric Association (AOA) states that “Doctors of Optometry are independent primary health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures as well as diagnose related systemic conditions.” Optometry is the nation’s third largest independent healthcare profession. Over half the people in the United States wear glasses or contact lenses.

The number of new practicing optometrists is limited by the fact that there are presently only 20 schools and colleges of optometry in the United States and one in Puerto Rico. For the 2008-2009 academic year, 16 out of the 20 schools reported information regarding admission; 2,822 applicants submitted approximately 7,766 applications for the 2,482 first professional year seats available. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook (2008-2009 Edition), Optometrists held about 33,000 jobs in 2006. Employment of optometrists is expected to grow as fast as average for all occupations through 2016 in response to the vision care needs of a growing aging population. Most optometrists are in general practice. Optometrists usually remain in practice until they retire, so job openings arising from replacement needs are low. Employment growth will be fastest in retail optical stores and outpatient clinics. There continues to be a significant need for underrepresented minorities in this profession.

According to the 2006 AOA Economic Survey, the median net income for all optometrists in practice ranged was \$105,000, while the median annual earnings of salaried optometrists was \$91,040. The middle 50 percent earned between \$66,560 and \$118,490. The individual net income of optometrists, like that of most professions, tends to rise with the number of years in practice. All states and the District of Columbia require that optometrists be licensed, which requires a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree from an accredited optometry school and a passing score on both a written and a clinical state board examination. Licenses are renewed every 1 to 3 years and in all states, continuing education credits are needed for renewal.

Optometry Education

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. Since the four-year optometry curriculum prepares graduates in all areas, a residency does not introduce but rather enhances experiences in a selected area.

Pre-Optometry Preparation

Admission requirements at all schools require the completion of a minimum of at least 90 semester units of college coursework; however, a Bachelor’s degree may be required and is strongly recommended. Ninety percent of new entrants at most schools have obtained Bachelor’s degrees. A student’s academic evaluation is based upon overall GPA, science GPA, college attended, degree progress, and course load difficulty. The overall average GPA for the 2008 entering class at the 16 schools and colleges of optometry that reported admission information ranged from a high of 3.70 to a low of 3.05.

Common Components Required for Admission:

- Application including personal statement; Official transcripts from all colleges attended;
- Official Optometry Admission Test (OAT) scores; Letters of recommendation; Optometry experience/exposure
- Personal interview

In July, 2009, OptomCAS the central application service for schools and colleges of optometry was launched. OptomCAS will provide applicants a single web-based application service and an opportunity to apply to more than one participating optometry school or college with one application. For more information, visit www.optomcas.org.

Before applying to Optometry school, each applicant should become acquainted with at least one optometrist and if possible gain some first-hand experience to see what optometrists do on a daily basis to confirm motivation for entering optometry.

Course Requirements for Optometry School:

Prerequisite admission requirements vary from school to school. Please refer to the **Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)** website: www.opted.org. Most students major in the sciences (biology, chemistry, etc.) because the prerequisites for optometry schools are science intensive and they find a great deal of overlap between major requirements and those required for optometry school, although a science major is not required.

Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual optometry programs. Listed below are the prerequisite admission requirements for the 3 Optometry programs in California.

The Southern California College of Optometry (articulation agreement)

Application Deadline	March 15 – Yet SCCO begins to process applications on July 15 of each year!
Overall Avg. GPA	3.35
<u>Required Courses:</u> Bachelors degree required	
Calculus	3 sem. units Math 115 OR 119A OR 122
General Biology or Zoology w/lab	8 sem. units Bio 111 w/ 111L, 212 w/ 212L, 213 w/ 213L
Microbiology or Bacteriology w/lab	3 sem. units Micro 211
General Physics w/lab	8 sem. units Phys 100A, 100B OR 151, 152
General Chemistry w/lab	8 sem. units Chem 111A, 111B
Organic Chemistry	3 sem. units Chem 320A OR 322A OR 327
Biochemistry	3 sem. units Chem 441A OR 448 OR 302
Human Anatomy	3 sem. units Bio 208
Human Physiology	3 sem. units Bio 207 OR 342 w/342L
Psychology	3 sem. units Psy 100
English Composition & Literature	6 sem. units Engl 100, 102, 184 or equivalent
Statistics	3 sem. units Math 108, Psy 210, Bio 260 OR HDev 250

The University of California, Berkeley School of Optometry (articulation agreement)

Application Deadline:	December 15
Overall Avg. GPA	3.53
<u>Required Course:</u> Bachelors degree required	
Biology or Zoology	1 semester Bio 212 w/212L, 213 w/213L
Human Anatomy	1 semester Bio 208
Human Physiology	1 semester Bio 207
General Physics	2 semesters Phys 151, 152
Microbiology	1 semester Micro 200 OR 211
General Chemistry w/lab	1 semester Chem 111A, 111B (required for Organic Chem)
Organic Chemistry	2 semesters Chem 320A, 320B OR 322/323A & 322/323B
Biochemistry	2 semesters Chem 441A & 441B OR 448
Psychology	1 semester Psy 100
English Composition & Literature	2 semesters Engl 102, 184 or equivalent
Calculus	2 semesters Math 122, 123 OR Math 119A, 119B
Statistics	1 semester Bio 260 OR Math 108
<u>Recommended Courses:</u> Genetics and Cell Biology	

Western University of Health Sciences

Application Deadline:	April 1
<u>Required Courses:</u>	
Calculus	3 sem. units Math 119A OR 122
General Biology or Zoology w/lab	8 sem. units Bio 111 w/ 111L, 212 w/ 212L, 213 w/ 213L
Microbiology or Bacteriology w/lab	3 sem. units Mico 200 OR 211 OR 320
General Physics w/lab	8 sem. units Physics 100A, 100B
General Chemistry w/lab	8 sem. units Chemistry 111A, 111B
Organic Chemistry w/lab	3 sem. units Chemistry 320A & 320B OR 322A/323A
Biochemistry	3 sem. units Chemistry 441A & 441B OR 448
Psychology	3 sem. units Psych 100
English Composition & Literature	6 sem. units English 100, 102, 184 or equivalent
Statistics	3 sem. units Math 108
<u>Recommended Courses:</u> Anatomy and Physiology	

OAT:

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) must be taken by all applicants seeking admission to schools and colleges of optometry. The OAT is a standardized exam, which exclusively contains multiple choices test items. There are six components to this exam: Quantitative Reasoning, Reading Comprehension, General Biology, General Physics, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry. The OAT is a computerized test offered at Prometric Testing Centers. The most desirable schedule for applicants is to take the exam from February of their junior year to October of their senior year in college. Visit www.opted.org for more information.