

Exploring: Optometry

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

In 2021, the median salary was \$124,300 and employment is expected to grow 10% by 2031!

Education Programs

Optometrists need a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree. In 2023, there were 23 accredited Doctor of Optometry programs in the United States. View a [complete list of accredited programs](#) on the Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry's website. In the 2021 - 2022 application cycle, the average applicant applied to 5 OD programs. 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.

Admission Requirements

Work with your faculty advisor to plan for prerequisite requirements. Start early and consult each institution's individual website for specific requirements!

NOTE: Some schools may require additional or specific coursework. Check each program individually to ensure your coursework meet the program requirements!

Typical Prerequisites Include:

- ▶ Biology with lab
- ▶ General Chemistry with lab
- ▶ Organic Chemistry with lab
- ▶ Microbiology
- ▶ English
- ▶ General Physics
- ▶ Calculus and/or Statistics
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Human Anatomy and
- ▶ Physiology Biochemistry

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. [Learn more about the OAT.](#)
- ▶ Content tested on the OAT:
 - ▷ Survey of the Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry)
 - ▷ Reading Comprehension
 - ▷ Physics
 - ▷ Quantitative Reasoning

Admission is based on a holistic review, involving factors beyond OAT scores and GPA:

- ▶ Exposure to optometry
- ▶ Research experience
- ▶ Leadership and
- ▶ involvement Employment
- ▶ Volunteer experiences

Additional Tips

- Perform strong academically. The average cumulative GPA of the 2022 entering class was a 3.52
- 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. Check what each school requires for letters of recommendation
- 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

Want more information?

Schedule an appointment through [Handshake](#) to meet with a career coach, learn more and create plans to meet your goals!