

How to Get into Optometry School

What type of education is required to become a Doctor of Optometry?

Doctors of Optometry must successfully complete a four-year accredited degree program at one of the schools or colleges of optometry. Most students accepted by a school or college of optometry have completed an undergraduate degree. However, each institution has its own undergraduate prerequisites, so applicants should contact the school or college of their choice for specific requirements.

What undergraduate courses should I take to help prepare me for optometry school?

The requirements for admission to the schools and colleges of optometry vary, but students wishing to study optometry should be certain to take at least a year of biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, general physics, and microbiology; English; college mathematics; and other social science and humanities courses. The science courses should be pre-professional level courses designed for science majors or health professional students and should offer laboratory experience. Brief survey courses in the sciences will not prepare you for optometry school. Be sure to consult with the pre-optometry advisor at your school or an advisor at the school or college of optometry that you plan to attend.

What kind of curriculum should I follow?

Use the following undergraduate courses only as a guide. Not all the courses listed below may be required by all schools, and some schools may require other courses not included in this sample.

- *Principles of Biology*
- *Microbiology*
- *College Chemistry I and II*
- *College Physics I and II*
- *Anatomy and Physiology I and II*
- *English Composition I and II*
- *College Algebra*
- *Trigonometry*
- *Calculus*
- *Psychology*
- *Statistics*
- *History*
- *Speech*
- *Social Science*
- *Other humanities*
- *Introductory business and/or computer course*

What do I have to do to apply for admission to optometry school?

Since each optometry school may have slightly different admissions criteria, applicants should contact each school and/or college to which they are interested in applying. Most optometry schools and colleges require applicants to complete an application, write a personal essay; submit transcripts from colleges attended by the applicant; take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) and submit scores; provide letters of recommendation; participate in a personal interview; and demonstrate experience or exposure to the field of optometry.

When must I apply to optometry school?

Early applications are desirable, and deadlines range from December to April 1 for the various schools and colleges of optometry. Contact the school(s) or college(s) of your choice to obtain application instructions and forms.

What type of selection procedures are used to evaluate applicants?

Generally, colleges of optometry admit students who have demonstrated strong academic commitment and who exhibit the potential to excel in deductive reasoning, interpersonal communication, and empathy. Potential optometry students may be evaluated on the basis of grade point average, performance on the Optometry Admission Test (OAT), extra curricular and community activities, personal interview, professional potential, etc.

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 just a few of the qualities that impress most admission committees.

Each institution has its own criteria; therefore, you should contact the school(s) or college(s) of your choice to obtain a copy of its catalog and specific application guidelines.

Optometry Admission Test (OAT)

What is the Optometry Admissions Test?

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. The OAT is sponsored by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) for applicants seeking admission to an optometry program. All schools and colleges of optometry in the United States, and the University of Waterloo, Canada require the OAT.

The following five optometry schools have contracts with the State of Arkansas. That means that an Arkansas resident who is accepted by one of these schools can apply to have a substantial part of their tuition paid by the State of Arkansas.

Illinois College of Optometry 3241 South Michigan Avenue Chicago IL 60606 800.397.2424	Northeastern State University College of Optometry Tahlequah, OK 74464-2399 918.458.2095	University of Missouri –St. Louis School of Optometry 8001 Natural Bridge Road St. Louis, MO 63121-4499 314.553.6263
University of Houston College of Optometry 4800 Calhoun Houston, TX 713.749.3361	Southern College of Optometry 1245 Madison Avenue Memphis, TN 38104 800.238.0180	

For addresses and phone numbers of other optometry schools:

Link to Schools and Colleges of Optometry

http://www.opted.org/info_links.cfm

As a graduate of a foreign school/college, how do I become eligible to practice in optometry in the United States?

To be eligible to take the National Board of Optometry Examination and all state licensure examinations, you must have graduated from one of the seventeen schools/colleges of optometry in the United States that are accredited by the Council on Optometric Education. For further information, contact the National Board of Optometry at www.optometry.org

Option 1

Of the seventeen schools/colleges of optometry, the following will award an O.D. degree to graduates of foreign schools upon completion of a special program:

- *The New England College of Optometry*
- *Pennsylvania College of Optometry*
- *Pacific University, College of Optometry*

Option 2

Of the seventeen schools/colleges of optometry, the following will admit graduates of foreign schools to their programs with advanced standing:

- *Illinois College of Optometry*
- *The New England College of Optometry*
- *Pennsylvania College of Optometry*
- *State University of New York, State College of Optometry*
- *University of Houston, College of Optometry*

More information may be obtained directly from the individual institutions listed above

Taken from the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry website