

- Doctors of optometry examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system and eye. They may be the first to recognize systemic diseases in their patients such as diabetes or high blood pressure.
- Besides routine eye exams and fitting patients for corrective lenses, optometrists treat many other eye problems including glaucoma and visual skill problems such as the inability to move, fixate and focus the eye.
- Although the majority of optometrists practice primary care optometry, some specialize in particular populations or treatments including pediatrics, low vision rehabilitation, sports vision, learning disabilities, and head trauma.
- Optometrists also encourage preventive measures such as monitoring children's vision, evaluating school vision, and promoting nutrition and hygiene education.
- Optometrists collaborate with ophthalmologists, physicians (MDs or DOs) who perform eye surgery, as well as diagnose and treat eye diseases and injuries.

Education & Licensure

- Generally, schools require at least two or more years of undergraduate work (90 credit hours). The preference, however, is for students with a bachelor's degree.
- Optometry school is a four year program. The first two years are largely classroom-based and the third and fourth year are spent mostly in clinical settings. After successful completion of the 4 years, students graduate with an O.D. (Doctor of Optometry).
- A licensure exam is required.

Preparation

- Optometry programs look for well-rounded students who are strong in science and have good communication skills. Programs consider GPA as well as the score on the aptitude test, the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT).
- They also look for empathy, leadership skills, extracurricular and community activities, and observation experiences in optometric facilities.
- All required courses must have a minimum C grade.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each optometry school but similar to this list)

Requirement	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
General Biology with lab	BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 & BIOL 23100 & 23200 (lab) or BIOL 23000 & upper level biology (including 2 hours of lab)
Anatomy & Physiology	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
Microbiology with lab	BIOL 22100 or BIOL 43800
General Chemistry with lab	CHM 11500-11600 or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 12300-12400 or CHM 13600 or CHM 12901 (<i>CHM 11500 Credit Exam recommended along with CHM 12901 some students may earn 11500 credit with course sequence 12901/25500 & 25600/23900</i>)
Organic Chemistry with lab (1-2 semesters depending on school)	CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500 or CHM 25700 (for schools requiring only 1 semester)
Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33900 or CHM 43300 or MCMP 20800 (CHM 33300, CHM 53300)
Physics with lab	PHYS 22000-22100 or 23300-23400 or PHYS 17200 & 27200 or PHYS 17200 & 24100 (may need 1 hr lab such as PHYS 25200) or ENGR 16100-16200*
English (generally need 6 hours)	ENGL 10600 or ENGL 10800 or SCLA 10100*; plus another English course with strong writing component (either writing or literature)
Psychology	PSY 12000
Calculus	MA 16100 or MA 22300 & MA 22400
Statistics	STAT 30100 or 50300, some schools will accept PSY 20100* or SOC 38200*
Pre-Med Planning Seminar (Optional)	BIOL 39600 is a 0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to optometry school and other health professions programs

*Ask individual optometry schools if they will accept these courses toward their requirements. ~~Courses~~-no longer offered.

Student Organization: Pre-Optometry Club

Program Information

- [OptomCAS Information about Schools and Colleges](https://www.optomcas.org/information-about-schools-colleges) <https://www.optomcas.org/information-about-schools-colleges>
- A list of all the [programs and their prerequisite courses](https://optometriceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ASCO-Prerequisites-2023-5-8.pdf) is available at <https://optometriceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ASCO-Prerequisites-2023-5-8.pdf>
- One source of information about the field is the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry [Optometry Career Guide](https://optometriceducation.org/pdfs/careerguide-august-2020.pdf) <https://optometriceducation.org/pdfs/careerguide-august-2020.pdf>

Applying

- Application is through an online application system called OptomCAS which opens in late June.
- Your online application will include an essay explaining why you are interested in becoming an optometrist.
- The individual optometry programs will ask for supplementary information and will, hopefully, invite you to their campus for an interview.
- Competitive applicants have:
 - Strong academic performance including a GPA of 3.5 or better
 - High scores on the OAT
 - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
 - Undergraduate research experience is valued
 - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experiences
 - Strong positive letters of recommendation
- Early application is essential. OptomCAS opens in late June and should be submitted by early August.

Fee Assistance

- [OAT Partial Fee Waiver](https://oat.ada.org/) <https://oat.ada.org/>
- OptomCAS – No fee waivers are available for the application. Some school-based and other financial aid may be available. The [Financing an Optometric Education](https://optometriceducation.org/future-students/resources/financing-an-optometric-education/) resources from ASCO are useful. <https://optometriceducation.org/future-students/resources/financing-an-optometric-education/>

Employment Outlook

- Currently there are approximately 40,600 optometrists involved in direct patient care. Optometrists deliver about 70% of eye care and practice in many settings including solo and group practices, hospitals, retail settings, veterans' hospitals, research, industrial settings, and consulting.
- Average net incomes for optometrists according to the American Optometric Association are just under \$140,000.
- The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/optometrists.htm) is expecting 10% job growth (higher than average) through 2031. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/optometrists.htm>

Diversity Matters

The optometry profession needs professionals who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality all add to a richer experience for all students in the optometry program classroom, contribute to the optometry profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients.

Programs in the Region

- [Indiana University School of Optometry](https://optometry.iu.edu/admissions/index.html) Bloomington, IN <https://optometry.iu.edu/admissions/index.html>
- [Illinois College of Optometry](https://www.ico.edu/applying-to-ico) Chicago, IL <https://www.ico.edu/applying-to-ico>
- [Midwestern University, Chicago College of Optometry](https://www.midwestern.edu/admissions) Downers Grove, IL <https://www.midwestern.edu/admissions>

More Information

- [Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](https://optometriceducation.org/) (ASCO) <https://optometriceducation.org/>
- [Information on the Optometry Admissions Test](https://oat.ada.org/) (OAT) <https://oat.ada.org/>
- [OptomCAS](https://www.optomcas.org/application-process/how-to-apply/) (application service) <https://www.optomcas.org/application-process/how-to-apply/>
- [American Optometric Association](https://www.aoa.org/) (AOA) <https://www.aoa.org/>

Other Careers to Consider – Certified Orthoptist · Physician · Dentist · Podiatrist

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional