

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

**Schools and Colleges of Optometry: Admission Requirements**, a publication of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), offers specific information on each U.S. optometry school. All interested students should review this publication, available in the Career Services Center, or view current information via ASCO's home page [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org) that has links to each optometry school. School catalogs and videos are also available for review in the Career Services Center.

Admissions officers assess each candidate's **academic preparation**, (e.g., undergraduate coursework, GPA, and scores on the Optometry Admission Test) as well as their **professional potential** (via biographic information, knowledge of the profession and personal characteristics). These can be communicated in the candidate's application, letters of reference and an admissions interview. Optometry schools seek to admit students from a diversity of backgrounds.

There are seventeen U.S. schools of optometry which offer a four year program leading to the professional degree of Doctor of Optometry (O.D.). These include UC Berkeley, Southern California College of Optometry (SCCO), and schools in Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Tennessee and Texas. Admission requirements for schools of optometry vary. Most accepted applicants have completed at least three years of undergraduate study (two years of pre-optometry study is acceptable for entrance into some programs) and a large majority have earned a bachelor's degree. Potential applicants should check the latest catalog or web site for each school to determine prerequisites.

### Pre-requisite courses typically include:

Calculus/mathematics (1 or 2 quarters)  
General chemistry (1 year with a lab)  
Organic chemistry (1 or 2 quarters)  
General biology (2 or 3 quarters plus a lab)  
Microbiology/bacteriology (1 quarter)  
Physiology (1 quarter with lab)  
Physics (1 year with lab)  
English Composition or Literature (2 or 3 quarters)  
Statistics (1 quarter)  
Psychology (1 or 2 quarters)

Some schools also require or recommend:

Biochemistry (1 quarter)  
Human anatomy and physiology with lab  
(1 to 3 quarters)  
Microbiology lab

### The Optometry Admission Test (OAT)

This exam, required for admission to all U.S. optometry schools is now offered throughout the year as a computerized test (at Prometric Testing Center, 858-526-0858). Students must submit the application form online or by mail to the Optometry Admission Testing Program prior to arranging for a test date with Prometric. The exam should be taken no later than the Fall preceding entry into optometry school. The OAT is a multiple-choice test comprised of four parts: the Quantitative Reasoning Test presumes knowledge of basic mathematics, algebra, geometry and trigonometry required of college freshmen in preparation for science courses; Reading Comprehension is designed to reproduce reading experiences similar to studying an optometry science textbook; the Survey of Natural Sciences consists of items from basic first year biology, general and organic chemistry emphasizing problem-solving rather than simple recall; the Physics section is also constructed to evaluate problem-solving ability. Career Services Center offers a handout on test preparation. More registration information is available online at [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org).

### Non-Academic Requirements

Admissions committees are interested in each applicant's personal characteristics such as their demonstrated ability to communicate successfully with others, their motivation to be an optometrist, maturity and interest in serving others. These qualities are assessed through the information the applicant provides in the application essay, letters of reference and the personal interview.

**Letters of reference** (two or three) from some combination of the applicant's instructors, supervisors, extracurricular advisors or optometry professionals are required to provide more information on each candidate. A handout on how to obtain letters of reference is available in the Career Services Center.

**A personal statement** or some other form of a written narrative is usually part of each school's application. The essay provides candidates the opportunity to describe the process and experience by which they decided to become an optometrist as well as other academic and life experiences which have helped them develop as a person. The handout "Professional School Application Personal Statement" is available in the Career Services Center; advisors can critique application essays on request; and applicants can attend a workshop on writing the application essay for health professional school.

**Interviews** are required of applicants whom the admissions committee views as most competitive for admission. The interview facilitates assessment of the applicant and affords the chance to tour the campus, meet with faculty and currently enrolled students, and learn about financial aid and housing. Interview feedback from students who have interviewed previously at specific schools, "The Admissions Interview" handout, and a videotape on interviewing for optometry school are available in Career Services. Group sessions on interview preparation for professional school admission are offered Fall and Winter and are publicized on the Career Services Quarterly Calendar.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

There is a new Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS) <http://www.optomcas.org/>. Berkeley requires the UC Berkeley Graduate Application and a supplementary application to the School of Optometry. Refer to the ASCO's directory or web site for contact information. In general, schools and colleges of optometry begin accepting applications in August or September for their classes that begin the following Fall. Application deadlines vary from November to April; however, students are encouraged to apply well in advance of deadlines. Many schools begin offering acceptances as early as October or November.

## **DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY**

Optometrists are the major providers of vision care in America. They are educated, clinically trained and state licensed to examine, diagnose and treat conditions of the vision system, and recognize symptoms of eye diseases and general health problems that require referral to other health specialists. All optometrists provide general eye and vision care through general practice or through more specialized practice in contact lenses, geriatrics, low vision services (for visually impaired patients), occupational vision (to protect and preserve workers' vision and minimize eye strain), pediatrics, sports vision and vision therapy. Others may choose to enter optometry education and/or perform scientific research.

The majority of optometrists work in private or group practice. Others are employed in hospitals, research institutes, public health agencies or teach in colleges and universities. The demand for optometrists is expected to remain strong, particularly as the population ages. A recent AOA survey reported the mean net annual income of optometrists as \$139,000. Further information on optometry as a career is available in the Career Services Center's Career Library.

Many optometry schools encourage prospective applicants to seek out activities and experiences that will help them confirm optometry as their career choice. The UCSD Health & Medical Professions Preparation Program (HMP3), part of UCSD Academic Enrichment Program, has a mentorship program to match students with professionals. The HMP3 office is in Student Center B, Room 209 or call (858) 534-7579. The Pre-Optometry Club at UCSD is another way of making contact with optometrists.