



So You're Interested in Optometry?

Doctors of Optometry (O.D.) are primarily health care providers who manage and treat conditions and diseases of the human eye and visual system as regulated by state law. Optometrists diagnose problems or impairment, prescribe corrective lenses and provide treatment. They may prescribe therapeutic drugs to treat specific eye conditions. Optometrists may practice as independent practitioners, in a group practice, or in a health clinic or hospital. Recently, optometrists have begun to perform laser surgeries on the eye and specialize in low-vision care.

Quick Facts

Sample Job Titles	Median Wages (2019-2020)*	Required Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optometrist Ophthalmologists 	In CA: \$111,790+ In Los Angeles Area: \$111,520+ <small>*For current wages, visit CareerOneStop.org/salary</small>	Doctorate Degree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doctor of Optometry (O.D.)

The Path to Optometry



A baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution is preferred but not required for admission to all optometry schools. Admission to O.D. programs is highly competitive and have limited admittance, so a bachelor's degree can be a mark in your favor. Some schools will accept students after just three years of undergraduate study if students meet certain requirements. Other schools confer a bachelor's degree and ultimately the Doctor of Optometry degree during the professional program, allowing students to earn both in a shorter amount of time. Most traditional O.D. programs take four years to complete, after finishing the degree, some optometrists complete a 1-year residency program to get advanced clinical training in the area in which they wish to specialize.

Choosing an Undergraduate Major

As with most health fields, there is **no required undergraduate major** to apply to a Doctor of Optometry program. "Pre-optometry" is **not** a major at universities. You should give careful consideration to your choice of major and select an area of study that interest you. To apply to graduate school, you will need to complete certain prerequisite courses in science and math. Therefore, common undergraduate majors for students interested in optometry include:

- Biology, microbiology, molecular biology, genetics, or biochemistry
- Math, physics, or chemistry

How to Prepare for Optometry School

As an undergraduate pursuing your bachelor's degree, there are several things you can do to prepare for graduate school. You can begin now as a Citrus College student!

- Complete the **prerequisite coursework** for the O.D programs you are interested in. We've included a sample of common prerequisites on the next page of this handout. Prerequisites vary, so be sure to research schools and determine their requirements.
- Maintain a **high GPA**; grades are a major factor in the selection process.
- Study for the **Optometry Admission Test (OAT)**.
- Connect with faculty and professionals. Remember that most programs will require multiple **letters of recommendation**.
- Gain **experience**. Consider seeking out an optometrist in a private practice to shadow. Not sure where to start? You can begin with your family optometrist, who may be able to accept volunteers or suggest colleagues.



Sample Prerequisite Courses

In general, all prerequisite courses should be taken for a letter grade. Some campuses may have policies regarding whether their requirements can be met through lower-division or upper-division coursework (**Note:** Citrus College does not offer upper-division courses).

Common Prerequisites	Citrus College Courses
One year of English	ENGL 101 & 102, 103 or 104
One year of Biology	BIOL 124 & 125
One year of General/Organic Chemistry	CHEM 210/211 & CHEM 220/221
One year of General Physics	PHYS 201 & 202 or 203 <small>*Some campuses may accept PHYS 111 & 112. Refer to program specific websites for more information.</small>
Additional Coursework	BIOL 200, 201 & 220, MATH 165 & 190, PSY 101

IMPORTANT: This list is meant to be used as an informational guide. All students must refer to the individual campuses/programs for specific information on prerequisite requirements.

Optometry School Application Process

- Apply to O.D. programs through the **Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS)**. The OptomCAS is a centralized application that allows student to file one application and send it to multiple optometry programs. All schools and colleges of optometry participate in OptomCAS.
- Most schools, if not all, require students to take the **Optometry Admission Test (OAT)**. The OAT designed to provide optometry education programs with a means to assess program applicants' potential for success.
- Complete a **personal statement**. The personal statement represents an opportunity for you to present yourself as more than just a GPA and OAT score.
- Most schools will require an **interview**. In the interview they will assess for communication, problem solving and time management skills in a dynamic **think on your feet setting**. Other specific skills and qualities that schools are looking for are: Critical thinking, ethical decision-making, healthcare issues, and professionalism.
- Many programs require **letters of recommendation** from professors, people who know you well, or employers who can attest to your analytical and logical reasoning skills.

Resources

Organizations

- Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (asco.org)
- American Optometric Association (aoa.org)
- Optometry Admission Test (ada.org)

Podcasts

- Try Not to Blink (trynot2blink.com)
- The Unlikely Academic Podcast, The Real Graduate School Experience ([the real graduate experience](http://the-real-graduate-experience.com))

Visit **CandidCareer** to learn more about this occupation from the perspective of current
bit.ly/CandidOptometry

Related Occupations

Not sure if getting a doctoral degree in Optometry is the right fit for you? Here are some related careers with different educational requirements. For more information on these careers or others, visit ONetOnline.org.

Job Title	Median Wages	Required Education	Code
Optician, Dispensing	In CA: \$39,310	High School Diploma or equivalent	ECR
Ophthalmic Laboratory Technician	In CA: \$31,820	High School Diploma or equivalent	CSR