

### **NATURE OF THE WORK, EARNINGS AND OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK**

The American Optometric Association (AOA) states that “Doctors of Optometry are independent primary health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures as well as diagnose related systemic conditions.” Optometry is among the nation’s largest independent healthcare professions. Over half the people in the United States wear glasses or contact lenses.

The number of new practicing optometrists is limited by the fact that there are only 23 schools and colleges of optometry in the United States and one in Puerto Rico. For the 2017 academic year, applicants submitted a total of 13,339 applications for admission ([Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#)).

Optometrists held about 40,200 jobs in 2016. Employment of optometrists is expected to grow 18% through 2026 (much faster than the average for all occupations) in response to the vision care needs of a growing and aging population. Most optometrists are in general practice. Optometrists usually remain in practice until they retire. Employment growth will be fastest in retail optical stores and outpatient clinics. There continues to be a significant need for underrepresented minorities in this profession ([Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2018](#)).

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the median wage for optometrists in 2017 was \$110,300. The optometrist’s wages, like that of most professions, tend to rise with the number of years in practice. All states and the District of Columbia require that optometrists be licensed, which requires a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree from an accredited optometry school and a passing score on both a written and a clinical state board examination. Licenses are renewed every 1 to 3 years and in all states, continuing education credits are needed for renewal.

### **OPTOMETRY EDUCATION**

The Doctor of Optometry degree is a 4-year program. Optometry programs include classroom and laboratory study of health and visual sciences, as well as clinical training in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders. Included are courses in pharmacology, optics, vision science, biochemistry, and systemic disease. Residencies are not required to develop a specialty. Since the four-year optometry curriculum prepares graduates in all areas, a residency does not introduce but rather enhances experiences in a selected area.

### **PRE-OPTOMETRY PREPARATION**

Admission requirements at all schools require the completion of a minimum of at least 90 semester units of college coursework; however, a Bachelor’s degree may be required and is strongly recommended. Ninety percent of new entrants at most schools have obtained Bachelor’s degrees. A student’s academic evaluation is based upon overall GPA, science GPA, college attended, degree progress, and course load difficulty. **The overall average GPA for the fall 2018 entering class was 3.41**

### **COMMON COMPONENTS REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION**

Before applying to Optometry school, each applicant should become acquainted with at least one optometrist and if possible gain some first-hand experience to see what optometrists do on a daily basis to confirm motivation for entering the field.

## OPTOMETRY ADMISSION TEST

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) must be taken by all applicants seeking admission to schools and colleges of optometry. The OAT is a standardized exam, which exclusively contains multiple choices test items. There are four components to this exam:

1. Survey of Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry)
2. Physics
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Reading Comprehension

The OAT is a computerized test offered at Prometric Testing Centers. The most desirable schedule for applicants is to take the exam between February of their junior year and October of their senior year in college. **NOTE:** There is a 90 day grace period between exam retakes. Visit [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org) and [www.ada.org/en/oat](http://www.ada.org/en/oat) for additional information.

## APPLICATION

OptomCAS is the central application service for schools and colleges of optometry. OptomCAS will provide applicants a single web-based application service and an opportunity to apply to more than one participating optometry school or college with one application. For additional information, visit <http://www.optomcas.org/>.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS

Prerequisite admission requirements vary from school to school. Please refer to the **Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)** website: [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org). Most students major in the sciences (biology, chemistry, etc.) because the prerequisites for optometry schools are science intensive and they find a great deal of overlap between major requirements and those required for optometry school, although a science major is not required.

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***This is NOT a comprehensive list of prerequisites for all programs. Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual programs.***

Listed below are the prerequisite admission requirements for the three Optometry programs in California.

## UC Berkeley - School of Optometry

<https://optometry.berkeley.edu/admissions/requirements/course-requirements/>

UC Berkeley Prerequisites	IVC Courses
Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab	CHEM 1A & CHEM 1B
One semester of Organic Chemistry with lab	CHEM 12A or CHEM 12B
One semester of Biochemistry	BIO 10
Two semesters of General Biology with lab	BIO 2 and BIO 5
One semester of Calculus	MATH 3A/3AH or MATH 3B/3BH
Two semesters of General Physics with lab	PHYS 2A & PHYS 2B
One semester of Immunology	No equivalent courses at IVC
One semester of Microbiology	BIO 15
One semester of Human Anatomy with lab	BIO 11
One semester of Human Physiology with lab	BIO 12
One semester of Statistics	MATH 10 or ECON 10/10H or MGT 10/10H or PSYC 10/10H
One semester of Psychology	PSYC 1/1H
Two semesters of English	WR 1/1H and WR 2/2H

## Marshall B. Ketchum University - Southern California College of Optometry

<https://www.ketchum.edu/optometry/requirements>

A bachelor's degree is required for admission.

Marshall B. Ketchum University Prerequisites	IVC Courses
One semester of Calculus	MATH 11 or MATH 3A/3AH or MATH 3B/3BH
Two semesters of General Biology or Zoology	BIO 1/1H and BIO 5
One semester of Microbiology or Bacteriology with lab	BIO 15
Two or three semesters of General Physics with Lab	PHYS 2A & 2B, or PHYS 4A & 4B & 4C (must complete the series)
Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab	CHEM 1A & CHEM 1B
One semester of Organic Chemistry	CHEM 12A or CHEM 12B
One semester of Psychology	PSYC 1/1H
Two semesters of English Composition or Literature courses (writing intensive courses are also acceptable)	WR 1/1H and 2/2H
One semester of Statistics	MATH 10 or ECON 10/10H or MGT 10/10H or PSYC 10/10H
One semester of Human Anatomy with lab	BIO 11
One semester of Human Physiology with lab	BIO 12
One semester of Biochemistry (no lab required)	BIO 10

## Western University of Health Sciences - College of Optometry

<https://prospective.westernu.edu/optometry/od/requirements/#prerequisite-courses>

Western University of Health Sciences Prerequisites	IVC Courses
One semester of Calculus	MATH 3A/3AH or MATH 3B/3BH
Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab	CHEM 1A & CHEM 1B
One semester of Organic Chemistry with lab	CHEM 12A or CHEM 12B
One semester of Biochemistry	BIO 10
Two semesters of General Biology or Zoology with lab	BIO 2 and BIO 5 or BIO 16
Microbiology with lab	BIO 15
Two semesters of General Physics with lab	PHYS 2A & PHYS 2B
One semester of Statistics	MATH 10 or ECON 10/10H or MGT 10/10H or PSYC 10/10H
Two semesters of English (Composition, English Literature, Writing or Critical Thinking)	WR 1/1H and WR 2/2H
One semester of Psychology (general or human development)	PSYC 1/1H
Human Anatomy with lab (highly recommended)	BIO 11
Human Physiology with lab (highly recommended)	BIO 12