

Optometry

What is a Doctor of Optometry? Doctors of Optometry are defined by the American Optometric Association as “independent primary health care professionals for the eye.”

What do Doctors of Optometry do? Optometrists perform comprehensive examinations of both the internal and external structures of the eye, carry out subjective and objective tests to evaluate patients’ vision, analyze test findings, diagnose and determine treatment. Optometrists treat a variety of conditions and illnesses. Additionally, optometrists diagnose, manage and refer systemic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and others that are often first detected in the eye, provide pre- and post-surgical care, and promote overall eye health for youth and adults.

Where do Doctors of Optometry practice?

Some practice alone, with a partner or partners, or with other health care professionals. Many practice at hospitals, clinics, teaching institutions and community health centers, or they may choose to be employed by another optometrist, or in the ophthalmic industry, while others choose a career in the military, public health or other government service

How do I become an optometrist? There are 23 ACOE accredited schools and colleges of optometry – 22 are in the continental United States, and one is in Puerto Rico. (Note: two Canadian schools of optometry – the University of Waterloo and the University of Montreal – are also recognized by ACOE). All states require graduation from an accredited professional optometric degree program as a prerequisite for licensure. ACOE is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation as the accrediting body for optometric educational programs.

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 anatomy and physiology, biology, chemistry, organic chemistry and general physics, and courses in biochemistry, microbiology, English, college mathematics, statistics 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.

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), extracurricular 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.

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. All schools and colleges of optometry in the United States, and the University of Waterloo, Canada require the OAT.

How much will optometry school cost?

The cost of your education will depend upon where you choose to attend school. Many of the schools and colleges of optometry have financial arrangements or contract programs that allow students from various states to attend their institution at the resident rate. Contact the admissions officer at the school(s) or college(s) of your choice for specific tuition and fee information.

What is the average salary of an OD?

The average net income for optometrists was \$122,667, according to a recent AOA survey of member optometrists.

Is there projected job growth for Doctors of Optometry?

Yes. All areas of the country need optometrists to serve a population that is increasingly aware of the importance of prevention and proper health care, and which requires the services of optometrists now more than ever. In addition, the aging population of the United States will create an increased demand for vision care services in the next several decades. Optometrists are also needed to fill vacancies created through retirement.

For more information

opted.org/about-optometric-education/professional-o-d-programs/faqs
explorehealthcareers.org/en/Field/8/Optometry
bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/optometrists.htm#tab-1

All information is taken from opted.org/about-optometric-education/professional-o-d-programs/faqs.