WHAT IS AN OPTOMETRIST?

Optometrists work to evaluate, improve and preserve vision. They diagnose and treat certain conditions and diseases of the eye. Depending on the diagnosis, optometrists may prescribe medication, visual training, or corrective lenses. They examine the internal and external structure of the eye, evaluate vision and determine if glasses or contact lenses are needed. The following is a brief guide to Optometry requirements while here at UA.

PRE-REQUISITES:

NOTE: EACH OPTOMETRY SCHOOL ESTABLISHES ITS OWN SET OF PREREQUISITES. CHECK THE WEBSITES OF THE SCHOOLS THAT YOU ARE MOST INTERESTED IN TO OBTAIN A CURRENT LIST OF UNDERGRADUATE REQUIREMENTS.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Biology*</td>
<td>BSC 114/115 and BSC 116/117 or honors equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microbiology*</td>
<td>BSC 242 or BSC 310:312</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biochemistry*</td>
<td>BSC 450 or CH 461 and CH 462:463 (lab)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology and Social Behavioral Sciences*</td>
<td>PY 101 or honors equivalent and two SB or HY electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Chemistry*</td>
<td>CH 101 and 102 or honors equivalent</td>
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<td>Organic Chemistry*</td>
<td>CH 231, CH 232, and CH 237 (lab)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics and Statistics*</td>
<td>2 semesters math or statistics; MATH 125 required by some schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Physics*</td>
<td>PH 101 and PH 102 or honors equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:</td>
<td>BSC 300 (Cell Biology)</td>
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<td>BSC 315 (Genetics)</td>
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*All prerequisite courses must be completed with a grade of “C-” or higher.
EXAM AND GPA:

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information covering four tests: Survey of the Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry), Reading Comprehension, Physics and Quantitative Reasoning. The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) sponsor the OAT for applicants seeking admission to an optometry program. All schools and colleges of optometry in the United States, and the University of Waterloo, Canada require the OAT. Its purpose is to test the skills and knowledge that have been identified as key prerequisites for success in optometry school and the practice of optometry. It tests your knowledge of science from the required coursework and, therefore, should not be taken until those courses are virtually complete; the months immediately following your completion of the course requirements is the best time to take the OAT. This may be the spring of junior year, the summer after sophomore year, or anytime during senior year or beyond; it will depend on your individual timeline. How you prepare is up to you. The OAT is offered an unlimited number of times in a calendar year; however, applicants must wait 90 days between testing dates. Only scores from the four most recent attempts and the total number of attempts will be reported.

Grade Point Average (GPA): Optometry Schools expect academic excellence. Good grades; typically an undergraduate GPA of 3.3 or better is required to be competitive.

TIMELINE:

**Freshman Year:**
- Connect with the Health Professions Advising Office
- Start taking basic sciences (See chart above)
- Think about possible majors (Study what you love)
- Begin getting involved with volunteer opportunities (campus and community)
- Start shadowing
- Join some student organizations (Pre-Optometry Society)

**Sophomore Year:**
- Continue with next sequence of courses
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities (shadowing, volunteer, etc)
- Begin to think about becoming an officer in your organizations
- Visit Health Professions Office to begin to assess competitiveness
- BOTTOM LINE: Keep working on the things you established your first year!!

**Junior Year:**
- Identify Optometry programs you are interested in (Fall semester)
- Talk to Health Professions Advising Office about competitiveness (Fall semester)
- Register for OAT (Fall Semester)
- Study for OAT and take OAT (Spring Semester)
- Identify 5 individuals to write letters of recommendation (Fall Semester)
- Complete and Submit Application (OptomCAS) (Spring Semester-Summer)
- Keep working on the things you have established thus far

**Senior Year:**
- Wait to be contacted for interview
- Finish degree requirements
- Continue with activities
- Talk with HPAO about Plan B if necessary
- Graduate

RESOURCES:
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry http://www.opted.org/
UA Health Professions Website: www.prehealth.ua.edu
ASCO OAT information https://www.ada.org/oat/index.html