

Optometry Advising

1. Websites with essential information for students interested in optometry
 - a. ASCO - Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry - optometriceducation.org
 - b. OptomCAS.org - Optometry Centralized Application Service (portal to apply)
 - c. futureeyedoc.org - exploring the career
2. About optometry careers (courtesy of the ASCO websites, above)
 - a. Optometrists (ODs) are physicians (recognized as such under Medicare) who provide eye and vision care, by examining, diagnosing and managing disorders and diseases of the eye, evaluating a patient's vision, and detecting other diseases which may affect the eyes. They can prescribe medications and perform some surgical procedures.
 - b. Optometrists enjoy a rewarding career, assisting individuals with their sight in a variety of ways. Many are self-employed, with a flexible schedule and few emergencies, and often a net income of more than \$150,000. A very positive life/work balance! Optometrists may be engaged in a general practice, or in a specialty area (pediatrics, geriatrics, contact lenses, optometric education, etc.)
 - c. Optometrists should enjoy working with people, collaborating with other professionals, and providing compassionate care, and be able to tolerate repetitive daily activities and continuous patient education
 - d. Generally, students with an undergraduate degree then study optometry at a four-year accredited degree program at a college or school of optometry. When successfully completed, graduates earn their OD degree and can then begin to practice. However, individual optometry institutions may have slightly varying prerequisites.
3. Academic preparation - can vary by optometry program/institution, but generally:
 - a. Undergraduate coursework:
 - i. Biology - 2 semesters with labs
 - ii. General Chemistry - 2 semesters with labs
 - iii. Organic Chemistry - 2 semesters with labs
 - iv. Physics - 2 semesters with labs
 - v. Microbiology, English and College Math/algebra - 1 semester each
 - b. Content of Optometry Admission Test (OAT) for admission:
 - i. Natural Sciences (Biology, and General, and Organic Chemistry)
 - ii. Reading comprehension
 - iii. Physics
 - iv. Quantitative reasoning



- c. Courses at TCNJ
 - i. **Biology major curriculum** will meet the admissions requirements for most optometry programs (Bio Inquiry, Cell, Ecology, Genetics and Bio Sem, plus Bio options and correlate courses)
 - ii. **Non-Bio majors** need the basic Bio Inquiry course with lab, plus a second Bio lab course (Cell), plus Micro, as well as the correlate Chemistry and Physics courses
- 4. Experiential Preparation - can also vary by program, but generally:
 - a. Exposure to optometry is considered critically important
 - b. Type of experiences, number of hours can vary
 - c. First-hand experience is highly recommended
 - d. Optometry internships
 - e. Summer programs
- 5. Pathway options at TCNJ
 - a. HS student applying to 7-year accelerated TCNJ/SUNY BS/OD Optometry degree program
 - b. 4-year undergrad Bio major applying to 7-year Optometry TCNJ/SUNY program during their freshman year (not an option for the BS/MD prgm)
 - c. 4-year undergrad (any) major applying to (any) Optometry School after graduation
- 6. Steps to Take in Preparation for Optometry School
 - a. Do well in your courses - keep up that GPA. Aim for 3.5 or better
 - b. Establish good relationships with professors. Get to know them well, and enable them to get to know you well, in case you need them to write a Letter of Recommendation for you at some point
 - c. Set up an appointment to meet with Dr. Nayak, Chair, MCAC (Medical Careers Advisory Committee) and Director, TCNJ BS/OD program nayak@tcnj.edu
 - d. Gain experience: Shadow an optometrist, or work in an optometrist's office, so that you have experience with the daily activities of an optometrist
 - e. Demonstrate leadership skills and involvement/interest in community service
 - f. Request Letters of Recommendation
 - i. Most OD programs require anywhere from 1 to 4 letters of rec
 - ii. Letters are usually required from science professor(s), optometrist, and/or work supervisor.
 - iii. A Committee Letter may or may not be required, or preferred
 - iv. Seek letters from mentors and professors who know you well, and can speak to your qualifications and abilities to succeed

- g. Register and prepare for the OAT (Optometry Admission Test)
 - i. Metrics: score is scaled from 200 to 400 in increments of 10
 - ii. A 300 score is the 50th percentile
 - iii. An applicant should aim for 320 or the 70th percentile or higher
 - iv. Individual optometry programs determine the scores they view as acceptable
 - v. Content summarized at 3b above
 - vi. **Some** optometry schools will accept other standardized exam scores (GRE, MCAT, DAT, etc). Check the specific requirements for the school(s) you are interested in.
- 7. Application Process
 - a. The centralized application service for optometry programs is OptomCAS (optomcas.org). Students should apply through that platform
 - b. The annual application process begins in late June/early July with the opening of the application, and runs through the following May.
 - c. There are currently 25 schools of optometry, all of which participate with the OptomCAS process
 - d. There is an initial fee for application to one school, and a lesser fee for each application to additional schools.
 - e. The classes admitted in the Fall of 2025 had the following admission profile:
 - i. Nearly 2,900 applicants, each applying to an average of 4.3 schools
 - ii. Median age of 22, with ~73% female and 26% male
 - iii. The average cumulative GPA for all applicants was 3.45
- 8. Optometry School and Beyond
 - a. You must successfully complete the four-year accredited program at one of the schools or colleges of optometry. Different schools may emphasize different methodologies or missions, but all will provide the necessary education leading to licensure and practice.
 - b. In order to practice optometry, you must be licensed by the state in which you intend to practice.
 - c. Licensure required successful completion of a licensure examination, consisting of both written and clinical portions.
 - d. All states also require continuing education courses to be taken to meet renewal requirements for state licenses.
- 9. Essential and helpful sources of information
 - a. ASCO: Assoc of Schools & Colleges of Optometry - optometriceducation.org
 - b. <https://optometriceducation.org/future-students/resources/>
 - c. <https://optometriceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/careerguide-november-2024.pdf>
 - d. futureeyedoc.org