



OPTOMETRIST



A brief educational and career guide prepared by:

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What is a Doctor of Optometry?

A Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) is an independent primary health care provider who examines, diagnoses, treats, and manages diseases and disorders of the entire visual system. The services rendered by optometrists include: prescribing glasses and contact lenses, rehabilitation of the visually impaired, diagnosis and treatment of ocular disease. Optometrists can practice in a variety of settings:

- Solo or group practice
- Hospitals, clinics, and community health centers
- Public health
- Military
- Government

Within these settings, optometrists engage in primary care practice or they can specialize in an area such as pediatrics, geriatrics, occupational vision, low-vision services (for the visually impaired), or sports vision. Optometrists do not perform surgery nor prescribe medication.

Programs

There are currently 19 schools and colleges of optometry in the US (plus two in Canada and one in Puerto Rico) offering an OD degree. The four-year OD curriculum begins with two years of classroom and laboratory work in the basic sciences. The remaining two years are comprised primarily of supervised patient care in hospitals, private practices, and clinics. Upon completion of the program, an OD is qualified to seek appropriate state licensure. Although residencies are not required, 10 percent of all graduates will complete additional study in a specialty area.

Admissions Requirements

Admissions requirements can vary from school to school, Generally, OD programs expect a BA or BS with an undergraduate curriculum similar to the following:

1 year Biology with lab (BIOL 411-412)	1 semester Biochemistry (BMCB 658/659)
1 year Physics with lab (PHYS 401-402 or 407-408)	1 semester Microbiology (BMS 503)
1 year English (ENGL 401, 502, 503)	1 semester Psychology (PSYC 401)
1 year Chemistry with lab (CHEM 403-404)	1 year Mathematics (including Calc. and Statistics)
1 semester Organic Chemistry (CHEM 545/546)	

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Admissions Requirements

Some programs require anatomy and physiology, a full year of organic chemistry, or additional coursework in the humanities or social sciences. An applicant's undergraduate major is not a factor in admission, so students may complete these prerequisites as major requirements, general education requirements, or as electives.

Students should consult the *Schools and Colleges of Optometry Admissions Requirements* directory, available from The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry ([ASCO](#)), to determine the specific requirements of the programs they are interested in.

The Application Process

The application process for UNH students applying to OD programs begins a full two years before matriculation. Therefore, a student who wishes to begin a program the September after graduation from UNH needs to contact the Health Professions Advising office no later than September of their junior year to begin the process. For details of the application cycle see: www.unh.edu/premed-advising/appprocess.html

OD programs require that applicants take the [OAT](#) (Optometry Admission Test), which is offered throughout the year. [OptomCAS](#) is central application service for OD programs. Programs use a rolling admissions process and students are advised to apply as early in the process as possible.

Further Information

Valuable sources of information are the [American Academy of Optometry](#) (AAO) and The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry ([ASCO](#)). Contact them at:

AAO
6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 506
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: 301-984-1441
Web: www.aaopt.org/

ASCO
6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 510
Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: 301-231-5944
Web: <http://opted.org/>

Additional Resources:

[Related Links](#) from ASCO

[Explore Health Careers](#)