



PREOPTOMETRY INFORMATION SUMMARY

Room 206, Building 44 801-581-5744 ppa@advising.utah.edu

Website: <http://ppa.utah.edu>

Advisors: Shelley Nicholson (Director) snicholson@advising.utah.edu

Amy Urbanek, aurbanek@advising.utah.edu

Quentin Hodges, qhodges@advising.utah.edu

Alessandra Holt, aholt@advising.utah.edu



Doctors of Optometry examine the eyes and related structures to detect the presence of vision problems, eye diseases and other abnormalities. For more information about the profession and schools, visit www.opted.org.

ACADEMICS + ACTIVITIES = OPTOMETRY SCHOOL PREPARATION

These classes and activities will answer “Why Optometry” and prepare you for success in optometry school and your career.

Academic Preparation

Academic preparation for optometry school requires a Bachelor’s degree and completion of a set of prerequisite classes, usually science, which vary from school to school. Common classes are listed on the last page of this summary. For your degree, any major is appropriate. There is no preference in this regard, so study something you love! Competitive applicants have high grades so pace yourself in order to succeed, and remember that all grades will count when you apply even if you repeat classes.

Service to the Community

Because you are preparing for a humanitarian profession, it is important to have volunteer experiences that demonstrate a commitment to serving others in your community. It is suggested that this be ongoing throughout your college years prior to application for admission.

- Lowell Bennion Community Service Center <http://bennioncenter.org>

Patient Exposure

Interacting well with patients is one of the key indicators of a successful future provider. The most common way to have this experience will be working at an optometrist’s office, which provides direct care to patients.

Leadership Experience

As an optometrist, you will be a leader and a team member with your patients, your staff, your colleagues, and in your community. Examples of leadership includes offices in organizations, leadership in church activities, coordinating a project, serving on a committee, managing or training or supervising at work, teaching experience of any kind, coaching, peer counseling, mentoring, etc.

Why Optometry?

Research Experience

Physicians depend on medical literature to remain current in their field throughout their careers. Most medical schools required or highly recommend participation in research that tests a *hypothesis*. Your research experience can be from many different areas. **It does not have to be medically related or in a lab.**

- Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) <http://our.utah.edu/>

Shadowing

This should be one of your first experiences as a premedical student. Observing a physician in action will help you gather the information you need to fully commit to the profession and to learn about a variety of specialties.

Things to Remember

- What you do outside of class is important so don’t neglect activities. However, remember that activities *complement* your coursework, but *they will not compensate for low grades*.
- Make sure you have contact information for supervisors and physicians in case you need a recommendation letter. Try to keep an open relationship with them after you discontinue activities.
- Keep a record of all hours of service and experiences. The **PreMed Planner Spread Sheet** on our website can help with this. You will find it on our website under [Downloads](#).
- Writing reflections on each activity in a journal will be helpful when you complete your application and write your personal statement.

❖ APPLICATION TIMELINE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
OAT	Register & Take exam																		
Recom. Letters	Request letters (Have all letters send to OptomCAS via Electronic Letters of Recommendation service along with your application form)																		
Application	Prep - Research Schools - Write Personal Statement						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OptomCAS is available online from late June for a year. - Applications will be sent to designated schools starting Aug. - Fill-out the form & submit as early as possible. - Request transcript by printing out transcript request form. - Application deadlines are usually from Dec. through Apr. 												
	Supplemental Application																		
	Interviews																		
	Acceptance Notifications																		
Financial Aid																Priority filing for federal financial aid			

▪ OAT & GPA

Take the Optometry Admission Test (**OAT**) when you have finished the necessary coursework. The OAT is administered year around at Prometric Test Centers (SSB 490 @ the U, 801-581-7310). Taking the exam by spring will enable you to apply earlier. The OAT is divided into four sections: Survey of the Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry), Reading Comprehension, Physics and Quantitative Reasoning. For more information about OAT exam, visit <https://www.ada.org/oat/index.html>. The exam can be taken unlimited times, but you must wait for at least 90 days between testing dates. The best strategy is to prepare thoroughly and take the OAT once.

Optometry schools look at **GPA** in 2 different ways; science and overall.

❖ APPLICATION PROCESS

All students who want to apply for optometry schools in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico must use centralized application service called OptomCAS. Some schools also require supplemental applications and additional fees. Even though many optometry schools do not require a bachelor's degree, we strongly recommend students complete the degree.

▪ OptomCAS

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) sponsors a centralized application service called Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS). It centralizes and standardizes your application information. Apply to the schools of your choice using OptomCAS at www.optomcas.org. Application requirements include transcripts, personal background information, recommendation letters, extracurricular experiences, personal statement and fees. OptomCAS will be available in mid July and end in mid May of following year. Because many schools use a "rolling" admission process (they begin reviewing applications and admitting before deadlines), it will enhance your chances if you submit your application early regardless of when you take OAT. Even if you do not have your OAT score by the time you submit your application, OptomCAS will process your application without the score. To help us advise students we would appreciate if you would release your information to the Health Professions Advisor. This information will always be kept confidential.

▪ WICHE

WICHE (Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education) enables Utah residents to enroll in out-of-state professional programs at reduced tuition. For more information about WICHE program in general, please visit <http://www.wiche.edu/psep>. In order to qualify for WICHE you must have been a **resident of Utah for at least 5 years** when you apply to optometry schools. In the summer when you apply to optometry schools you should also apply to be WICHE certified. Visit <http://www.wiche.edu/psep/cert-off>. **The application deadline is October 15.**

▪ Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

OptomCAS recommend students to use their Electronic Letter of Recommendation service which allow letter writers to submit their letters online. Many optometry schools require letters from **1) optometrist** and **2) academic professor** (mainly science), but you can provide up to 4 letter writers. It is always a good idea to check with what your designated schools require. The more recent the letters, the better for your application.

< GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSORS BETTER! >

- Let professors know at the beginning that you would like them to keep an eye on your performance in class. It will give them a longer “observational window”. Visit their offices regularly and ask them for a letter at the end of the semester if you do well and they are agreeable.
- A key to a good letter is the establishment of a relationship between student and professor based on shared academic interests.
 - Ask thoughtful questions
 - Delve deeper into concepts presented in lectures
 - Share your academic and career goals
 - Ask for recommendations for additional reading
 - Inquire about their areas of interest and research
- After you have gotten to know professors, ask about further opportunities, e.g. teaching assistantships, individual research projects, etc.

< WHEN YOU REQUEST THE LETTER >

- Ask if the professor feels capable of writing a supportive letter. If not, you should probably try someone else.
- Remind the professor of topics, e.g. a project, a presentation or paper done for the class; a particular interest demonstrated in the class, or interaction you had with fellow students in the class.
- Ask if the professor would welcome written background material. You could include a brief biographical sketch, your interests and activities, career goals, and motivation toward your intended profession. You could also include a snapshot, copy of a paper written for that class, or transcript.
- Always give the professor ample time—two to three weeks minimum. Follow up to make sure that your letters have been sent. Send thank you notes.

❖ USEFUL WEBSITES

- Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry www.opted.org
- Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE) <https://www.wiche.edu/tuition-savings/psep/>

❖ Pre-Optometry CURRICULUM

Policies

CLEP Credit & Correspondence Study	Check with optometry schools you want to apply.
AP Credits	Generally students must take coursework beyond introductory classes waived by AP.
Online Courses	Check with optometry schools you want to apply.
Repeats	All repeated courses will be considered but only the most recent course you took will be included in GPA calculation.
Withdrawals	W's should normally be used only for non-academic emergencies.

PreOptometry Science Course Guide¹

This guide is designed for applying to a *range* of medical schools. It is **not a comprehensive list**. Requirements may vary by school. Shading indicates the classes most commonly required by medical schools. See a PPA advisor for more information.

[Classes with * may be taken @ SLCC. However, not all medical schools accept prerequisites from 2 year schools]

BIOLOGY	CHEMISTRY	MATH	PHYSICS
<p>*1610 (4) Fundamentals of Bio I (Prereq: MATH 1010) Formerly BIOL 1210</p>	<p>OPTIONAL preparatory courses for CHEM, MATH, and PHYS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Math Boot Camps, MATH 10 or MATH 15</i> • <i>Chemistry Boot Camp CHEM 10</i> • <i>CHEM 1200 (3) Prep for College Chemistry</i> • <i>CHEM 1208 (1) Intro to Periodic Table</i> • <i>CHEM 2308 (1) Intro to O-Chem</i> <p><i>NOTE: In order to take a math class, you must have the required ACT, SAT or math</i></p>		<p>Physics has 2 options. Consult with both your major advisor and a PPA advisor to choose the correct lab and lecture sequence</p>
<p>2325 (4)⁴ Human Anatomy Recom. by <u>most</u> schools Fulfills BIOL lab requirement for most schools</p>	<p>*1210 (4) 1215 (1) Gen Chem 1+ Lab (Prereq: MATH 1050)</p>	<p>*1050 (4) & *1060 (3) College Algebra & Trig Can be substituted with 1080 (5)</p>	<p>OR</p>
<p>2420 (4) Human Physiology Recom. by <u>most</u> schools (Prereq: Biol 1610 & Chem 1210)</p>	<p>*1220 (4) Gen Chem 2 1225 (1) Lab (Prereq: CHEM 1210)</p>	<p>1210 (4) Calculus 1 (Prereq: MATH 1050 & 1060 or 1080)</p>	<p>2010 (4) Gen. Physics1 2015 (1) Lab (Prereq: MATH 1060)</p> <p>2210 (4) for Scientists & Engineers 1 2215 (1) Lab (Prereq: MATH 1210)</p>
<p>*2020 (3) Cell Biology Fulfills 2nd General Bio req. (Prereq: Biol 1610 & Chem 1210)</p>			
<p>PATH 3100 (3) Medical Microbiology Required by <u>most</u> schools</p>	<p>2310 (4) O-Chem 1 2315 (2) Lab (Prereq: CHEM 1220)</p>	<p>1220 (4) Calculus 2 <u>Optional</u> (Prereq: MATH 1210)</p>	<p>2020 (4) Gen. Physics2 2025 (1) Lab (Prereq: PHYS 2010)</p> <p>2220 (4) for Scientists & Engineers 2 2225 (1) Lab (Prereq: MATH 1220 & PHYS 2210)</p>
<p>BIOL/CHEM 3510 (3) Biochem I Required by many schools. (Prereq: CHEM 2310) Recommended Prereq: Biol 2020 & Chem 2320</p>	<p>2320 (4) O-Chem 2 2325 (2) Lab (Prereq: CHEM 2310) Required by <u>some</u> schools</p>	<p>1070 (3) Stats Required by <u>most</u> schools (Prereq: MATH 1010)</p>	
<p>2 Biology LABs are required by most optometry schools. Taking either the Anatomy OR Physiology lab will fulfill the first biology lab for most schools. The second biology lab can be fulfilled by any biology course such as BIOL 1615, 1625, 3115, 3205, 3235, 3515, 3525 and more. Taking labs at SLCC is also acceptable.</p>			
<p>< NON-SCIENCE COURSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 semesters of English Composition (WRTG 2010 & CW) • 1 Psychology course. 			