

Becoming a Competitive Applicant to Optometry Programs

Applicants to optometry school must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours (3 years) of college coursework, along with the pre-optometry prerequisites. Most pre-optometry students complete a Bachelor's degree prior to entering optometry school. Competitive applicants for admission to optometry school have a solid academic record, a well-rounded profile of co-curricular experiences, strong scores on the Optometry Admission Test (OAT), supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing Optometry.

SELECTING A MAJOR

Applicants with a well-rounded education, a variety of interests and personal experiences are ideal candidates. Students are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong overall academic performance while also focusing on developing a solid foundation in the sciences. Optometry programs look for students who demonstrate the academic ability to handle a rigorous course load.

GPA

GPA's calculated on optometry school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the GPA's calculated by the optometry schools. Aim for GPA's of 3.3 or higher.

GRADES

C is an honorable grade, though most, if not all, grades should be higher! Multiple grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to optometry school application, could interfere with competitive admission to optometry schools. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade; consult with your advisors as you decide. More than two W's, however, could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges later in optometry school.

PRE-REQUISITE AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

There is variability among prerequisite courses required by optometry schools; students are strongly encouraged to research potential schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite course and other admissions policies. Pre-Optometry students who complete the following courses should be well-prepared to apply to a large percentage of optometry programs. Students should consult with advisors for timeline planning.

PRE-REQUISITES MOST OFTEN REQUIRED BY OPTOMETRY PROGRAMS

- Two semesters of General Biology with lab – BIO 201/205; BIO 202/206
- Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab – CHM 203/204; CHM 205/206; CHM 285/286 also meets this requirement
- Two semesters of Organic Chemistry with lab – CHM 321/322; CHM 323/324
- One semester of Biochemistry – CHM 371 or CHM 381
- Two semesters of General Physics with lab – PHY 201/205; PHY 202/206
- One semester of Microbiology – BIO 350 or BIO 451
- One semester of Human Anatomy with lab
- One semester of Human Physiology with lab
- One semester of Psychology – PSY 201
- Two semesters of English
- One semester of Statistics
- One semester of Calculus – MTH 231 or MTH 245

While many optometry programs may accept AP/CLEP/IB, dual-credit college courses, or community college courses to meet prerequisites, applicants should research individual schools to be certain of their admissions policies.



PRE-HEALTH GUIDES AND RESOURCES

EDGE PRE-HEALTH ADVISING:

Pre-Health Advisors in the EDGE are available to meet with students one-on-one about their pre-health goals and path. Faculty pre-health advisors are also available to assist students, including a faculty advisor who is designated for Pre-Optometry. The list of faculty advisors is available at <http://blogs.creighton.edu/edge/pre-health/advisors/>

EDGE PRE-HEALTH SEMINARS:

The EDGE seminars assist students in exploring the optometry profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Students should participate in PHLC 200 in their sophomore year. In either the junior or senior year, pre-optometry students are encouraged

to participate as "guests" in the Pre-Medicine Seminar (PMED 300), as the preparation process for optometry and medical school are very similar.

PRE-OPTOMETRY CLUB:

All pre-optometry students should participate in the Pre-Optometry Club. This student-run organization provides leadership opportunities to further explore and gain experience in the optometry profession - <https://cuinvolved.creighton.edu/organization/pre-optometry>

PRE-HEALTH LISTSERV: Subscribe at: <http://lists.creighton.edu/mailman/listinfo>

HELPFUL LINKS:

creighton.edu/edge - Creighton EDGE

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry:
<https://optometriceducation.org/>

Course Scheduling Considerations:

Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

Chemistry: General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Students must have a sufficient chemistry background (completion of high school chemistry) and sufficient math background (an ACT math score of at least 24 or an SAT math score of at least 580) to be eligible take General Chemistry in the freshman year. Students may instead take additional math and/or CHM 105 Introductory Chemistry in freshman year to be better prepared for General Chemistry.

OPTOMETRY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS:

NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS: Optometry programs require the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) in order to apply. Students typically take the OAT approximately 12-15 months before starting an optometry program, if accepted. To do well on the OAT, it is necessary to first complete appropriate pre-optometry courses and complete intensive study for the test.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

Students must submit at least two and up to four letters of recommendation with their OptomCAS application. Optometry programs have different requirements for letters. It is recommended to obtain at least one letter from a professor who taught the student in a science course. In some cases, a letter from an optometrist might be required or recommended.

INTERVIEWS: Many optometry programs will interview promising applicants. The EDGE Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

Biology:

General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring, respectively. Completion of either General Chemistry I (CHM 203) or Introductory Chemistry (CHM 105) is required to take General Biology II.

Math:

Pre-Optometry students are required to complete a calculus course. MTH 231 or MTH 245 will fulfill this requirement. Math, physics, and chemistry majors will need more than one semester of calculus and usually should not take MTH 231.

Summer: Science courses may be taken in the summer by pre-optometry students, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to “catch up”) and, in many cases, not at community colleges. Speak with a pre-health advisor before taking summer science courses.

Sample First Semester Schedule: Course sequencing may vary depending upon a student's readiness.

- General Biology I with lab (4 sem. hours)
- General Chemistry I with lab (4 sem. Hours) or Introductory Chemistry (3 semester hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 sem. hours) – ENG or Critical Issues + COM
- Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PSY or SOC, foreign language
- RSP Class (.5 semester hours each freshman semester)

CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

Strong academics alone are not enough to be competitive for a optometry program. It is also important that you are a well-rounded applicant that participates in meaningful activities on your college campus and your community. Optometry programs value community service, leadership, research and other co-curricular involvement.



VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE

Students should seek out service experiences in both healthcare and non-healthcare settings, and it is beneficial to show sustained commitment over time. Check out the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities - <http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/>

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Optometrists are called on to connect with and help people different from themselves, and make their patients feel comfortable during treatment. Seek out experiences that help you build interpersonal relationships and interact with people from many walks of life.

HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE

Students should seek opportunities for hands-on, direct patient care experience, whether volunteer, paid, or both.

SHADOWING

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing current professionals in their field.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership comes in many forms. Creighton has a number of resources to help you gain leadership experience through various organizations and student programming. Showing some leadership skills now demonstrates you can be a leader in your community later.

RESEARCH

Research experience is not a requirement for admission to optometry programs, but may add an extra layer to your application if you are particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at <http://www.creighton.edu/curas/>.