**General Information:**

The prerequisites for optometry share significant similarities with those of other pre-professional curriculum. As with pre-medical, pre-dental, pre-physical therapy, and pre-physician assistant, pre-optometry requires a significant number of science courses, particularly in biology. The general prerequisites for many programs include:

- General Biology I and II (BIOL196/196L, BIOL 197/197l)
- General Microbiology (BIOL251/251L)
- General Chemistry I and II (CHEM 121/121L, CHEM 122/122L)
- General Physics I and II (PHYS 151/151L, PHYS 152, 152L)
- Organic Chemistry I and II (CHEM 241/241L, CHEM 242/242L)
- Calculus I (MATH 181)
- Statistics (STAT391 or STAT 491)
- Psychology (PSY101)
- Six Credit Hours of English

While most optometry programs require the above courses, these usually do not satisfy prerequisites required for any program. Unfortunately, requirements between programs diverge substantially beyond the course work listed above. For example, the University of California, Berkeley – School of Optometry also requires Comparative Anatomy, Mammalian Physiology, and one semester of Biochemistry. Conversely, the Southern California College of Optometry only requires one additional class in advanced psychology. Due to this variation, it is not possible to recommend curriculum beyond the list provided above and it is the student’s responsibility to investigate additional prerequisite course work for all programs of interest. Students can find prerequisite information for all accredited optometry programs at [http://www.opted.org/info_links.cfm](http://www.opted.org/info_links.cfm).

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is the standardized test required by all accredited optometry programs. This exam tests four areas: natural sciences (biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry), reading comprehension, physics, and quantitative reasoning. The scoring system for this examination is on a scale of 200 to 400 points and an average composite score is 300. The exam is offered twice a year in February and October. For specific dates and registration information, go to [http://www.opted.org/info_oatdates.cfm](http://www.opted.org/info_oatdates.cfm). While the general prerequisite courses prepare the student for the chemistry, physics, and mathematics portions of the OAT, it is in the student’s best interest to enroll in additional biology courses for maximal preparation for the biology component of this test. For this reason, most optometry programs recommend additional course work beyond the prerequisites which include physiology, anatomy, biochemistry, genetics, and developmental biology.

In addition to course work and standardized tests, many programs have additional requirements. These include letters of recommendation, community/clinical service, extracurricular activities, and experience observing an optometrist at work. Some programs require documentation of the service and/or the optometry experience. If this is the case, the student must obtain signed time sheets or other forms indicating the amount and extent of experience.
**Freshman Year:**

As with any pre-health profession curriculum, the student must initiate the sequence of science courses during the freshman year, especially for biology and chemistry. This is particularly true for optometry school as many programs require specific advanced biology courses. Therefore, the student must complete all prerequisite course work before enrolling in said biology courses. As with other pre-professional curriculum, it is in the student’s best interest to take the placement tests for Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and English. If the student elects to not take the placement tests, he or she may spend the entire freshman year taking prerequisites required for prerequisites for optometry school. This could result in delay of application to professional school by up to one year in the worst case scenario.

In the event that the student performs sufficiently well on the placement tests, he or she should enroll in General Biology and General Chemistry at the very least. This is essential since most optometry programs require some advanced Biology and at least one semester of Organic Chemistry. Since General Biology and General Chemistry are prerequisites for advanced Biology and Organic Chemistry, respectively, failure to enroll in these courses during the freshman year significantly delays completion of prerequisite course work required for application.

In addition to enrolling in general prerequisite course work, the student should investigate specific prerequisites required by all programs of interest. Information for all accredited programs in the United States is located at http://www.opted.org/info_links.cfm. The student must make a composite list containing all prerequisites for all programs he or she intends to apply to. The student should then consult their college course advisor to devise a strategy to complete all required curriculum in a timely fashion.

Finally the student should begin to work toward completion of non-curricular requirements. If any program of interest requires a specific type of service or work experience, the student should plan on acquiring relevant experience during the summer months. If the program requires specific extracurricular activity in university sponsored clubs or organizations, the student should investigate joining said clubs or organizations. The student is cautioned not to overextend him or herself. If the student cannot maintain an appropriate grade-point average, no amount of extracurricular activity can compensate for this deficiency.

**Sophomore Year:**

The student should continue to enroll in course work required for all programs of interest. It is prudent to visit the admission web sites for each school to ensure that the prerequisites did not change. In the event that changes occurred, modify the list of prerequisites compiled during the freshman year. Continue to gain relevant work and/or service experience and participate in extracurricular activities. Once again, the most important consideration is your grade-point average. The student must maintain high a academic performance in order to be competitive during the application process. No amount of extracurricular activities can compensate for unsatisfactory academic performance. Therefore, the student should be prepared to sacrifice some non-curricular obligations if this is necessary to maintain a high grade-point average.
Finally, it is prudent to begin securing letters of recommendation if any of the programs of interest require these or an evaluation from the pre-professional committee. Although many students simply request letters from professors whose classes they earned an A in, such letters often lack substance and do not reveal much about the student. Therefore, if any program requires letters or evaluations, it is in the student’s best interest to acquaint him or herself more substantially. One method that accomplishes this is conducting research in faculty laboratories. This allows a much more thorough assessment of the student’s intellectual capacity, maturity, and motivation. As such, letters secured from such professors carry more meaning than letters solicited from professors who only knew the student from the classroom environment. With this in perspective, it is advantageous to pursue research opportunities during the Sophomore year.

**Junior Year:**

Students should plan on completing all prerequisite courses by the end of this year. Additionally, the student should complete all service/work requirements during the junior year as well, since this is when he or she will apply to optometry school. Unfortunately, there is no central application service for optometry, so the student must investigate each program he or she intends to apply to and determine when each school begins to accept applications. Students should plan on applying as early as possible to maximize the probability of gaining acceptance. Applicants completing the process just prior to the deadline rarely matriculate to professional school.

Students must take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) prior to application to optometry school. The Optometry Admissions Testing Program offers this exam twice a year during October and February. Students may obtain precise dates and register online for this exam at [http://www.opted.org/info_oatdates.cfm](http://www.opted.org/info_oatdates.cfm). This program also provides information on the location of testing centers at the above site. It is advisable for students to take the test on the February date during the spring semester of the junior year. This allows early completion of the application process and maximizes the probability of matriculation to optometry school.

If any program requires an evaluation from the pre-professional committee, students must obtain a pre-professional interview packet from the Pre-Health Advisor at the beginning of the spring semester. The packet contains a recommendation form that the student must send to all individuals that the student requested a recommendation from. Students should instruct the referees to send the completed forms and letters directly to the committee as they are used to draft a composite evaluation of the student. Following solicitation of recommendation letters, students must complete the remainder of the application packet and return it to the Pre-Health Advisor. After the student turns in the completed application packet, the Pre-Health advisor will schedule the earliest possible evaluation date upon receipt of all recommendation letters. The Pre-Health advisor will notify the student of the date, time, and place of the interview at least one week in advance.

Students should plan on completing all non-curricular requirements during the summer between the junior and senior year. This includes any service/work requirements and extracurricular activities. If any program of interest requires documentation of hours, be sure to inform your supervisors of this to allow them to complete the necessary forms.
Senior Year:

Some programs conduct interviews during the fall semester of the senior year. If you applied to such a program, plan on scheduling a light course load during this semester. Plan to register for any remaining recommended course work for optometry school. Your end goal should not simply be gaining acceptance, but performing well following matriculation. The more recommended course work the student completes, the better prepared for optometry school he or she will be. If all recommended curriculum is complete, take some courses for personal enrichment.