

## **OPTOMETRY (O.D.)**

### **ACADEMIC AND CAREER INFORMATION**

#### **NATURE OF THE WORK, EARNINGS, AND OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK**

Doctors of Optometry are independent primary health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, as well as diagnose related systemic conditions. Optometry is among the nation's largest independent healthcare professions with over 33,000 currently employed in the field. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, about 150 million Americans use some sort of corrective eye gear.

The number of new practicing optometrists is limited because there are presently only 23 schools and colleges of optometry in the United States and one in Puerto Rico. For the 2016 academic year, 2,812 applicants submitted a total of 13,620 applications for admissions. Employment of optometrists is expected to grow 24% faster than the national average for all occupations through 2022 in response to the vision care needs of a growing and aging population. Most optometrists are in general practice. Employment growth will be fastest in retail optical stores and outpatient clinics. There continues to be a significant need for underrepresented minorities in this profession.

According to the American Optometric Association, the median wage for optometrists in 2016 was \$106,140. The individual net income of optometrists, like that of most professions, tends to rise with the number of years in practice. All states and the District of Columbia require that optometrists be licensed, which requires a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree from an accredited optometry school and a passing score on both a written and a clinical state board examination. Licenses are renewed every 1 to 3 years and continuing education credits are needed for renewal.

#### **OPTOMETRY EDUCATION**

The Doctor of Optometry degree is a 4-year program. Optometry programs include classroom and laboratory study of health and visual sciences, as well as clinical training in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders. Included are courses in pharmacology, optics, vision science, biochemistry, and systemic disease. Residencies are not required to develop a specialty. Since the four-year optometry curriculum prepares graduates in all areas, a residency does not introduce but rather enhances experiences in a selected area.

#### **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

A student's academic evaluation is based upon overall and science GPA, college attended, degree progress, and course load difficulty. The overall average GPA for the 2014 entering class was 3.31. Before applying to Optometry school, each applicant should become acquainted with at least one optometrist and gain some first-hand experience to see what optometrists do on a daily basis to confirm motivation for entering the field

Letters of Recommendation suggested sources include: An optometrist who can state through documented experience that the applicant knows what the profession of optometry entails, a professor with whom the applicant has done personal work (such as assisted on a specific project or served as a TA or reader), or with whom the applicant took a

course, and an employer or extracurricular activity advisor who can comment about the applicant's maturity, diligence, and conscientiousness.

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) must be taken by all applicants seeking admission to schools and colleges of optometry. The OAT is a standardized exam, which consists exclusively of multiple choice questions. There are four components to this exam: Quantitative Reasoning, Reading Comprehension, Survey of the Natural Sciences, and Physics.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisite admission requirements vary from school to school. Please refer to the [Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry \(ASCO\)](#) for more details.

Most students major in the sciences (biology, chemistry, etc.) because the prerequisites for optometry schools are science intensive and they find a great deal of overlap between major requirements and those required for optometry school, although a science major is not required. Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual optometry programs.

Listed below are the prerequisite admission requirements for 1 of the 3 Optometry programs in California. Non-science majors, keep-in-mind that the courses listed, may have additional pre-requisites. For all pre-reqs check out [Optometry Programs Admissions Directory](#).

**CSULB courses that fulfill admission requirements for [Marshall B. Ketchum University](#):**

Coursework	CSULB Courses	Units
Calculus	Math 115 OR 119A OR 122	3
General Biology or Zoology	Biology 211 & 212	6
Microbiology or Bacteriology with lab	Biology 311	3
General Physics with Lab	Physics 100A & 100B OR 151 & 152	8
General Chemistry with Lab	Chemistry 111A & 111B	8
Organic Chemistry	Chemistry 220A	3
Biochemistry	Chemistry 441A OR 448 OR 302	3
Human Anatomy with Lab	Biology 208	3
Human Physiology with Lab	Biology 207 OR 342 w/ 342L	3
Psychology	Psychology 100	3
English Composition & Literature	English 100, 102, OR equivalent	6
Statistics	Statistics 108 OR Psychology 210 OR Biology 260	3

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[OptomCAS](#) is the central application service for schools and colleges of optometry. OptomCAS provides applicants with a single web-based application service and an opportunity to apply to more than one participating optometry school or college with one application.

- [Applicants Resource Page](#)
- [Be a Doctor of Optometry: Put Your Future in Focus \(video\)](#)
- [Optometry: A Career Guide \(pdf\)](#)
- [Optometry Programs Admissions Directory](#)

For more information about Optometry, visit [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org) and see the HPAO advisor for further information on the application process, application assistance, and a list of upcoming workshops and events.