

Optometry School Preparation Guidelines

Each path to optometry school is different. This guide is to help you navigate your own path.

Every Semester you should plan to:

1. Successfully complete pre-professional coursework
2. Maintain excellent grades (3.5 and above to be competitive). Math and science coursework is especially critical
3. Keep your legal and student behavior records clean! These records can impact both admissions and professional licensure
4. Explore and participate in meaningful activities and experiences
5. Get to know your faculty and instructors and meet with a Pre-Health Advisor

Freshman Year – Year 1

School Year

- Focus on your academics and successful transition to college
- Join the Pre-Optometry Club and participate fully every year
- Start a resume - track activities and experiences; journal observations
- Be active; go to fairs and events
- Explore service opportunities in the Fall and participate in the Spring
- Explore majors based on interests; all majors are equal to optometry school admissions
- Explore optometry or healthcare-related employment and/ or research opportunities for summer (Spring)
- Register for PHLC 200 for your sophomore year (Spring)

TIP: Volunteer in your Freshman year – both medical and non-medical service is valued!

Summer

If listed, choose what works for you

- Participate in a summer program exploring the optometry profession – see optometriceducation.org for list of schools
- Seek optometry-related employment or service, if possible
- Seek shadowing opportunities with optometrists
- Find experiences for next year
- Explore summer research opportunities, if interested in research

Sophomore Year – Year 2

School Year

- Choose a major based on your interests
- Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences
- Participate in PHLC 200 Pre-Health Learning Community
- Explore the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCP) resources at www.optometriceducation.org; research optometry school pre-requisites
- Calculate completed Biology, Chemistry, Physics courses GPA (BCP); do this every term
- Request to be a Guest in PMED 300 for your Junior year if planning to apply after Junior year (Spring) – attend the sessions that are helpful to you

TIP: Focus on shadowing, volunteering, and consider research in your Sophomore year or summer, in interested

Summer

- Participate in a summer program exploring the optometry profession – see optometriceducation.org for list of schools
- Seek optometry-related employment or service, if possible
- Seek shadowing opportunities with optometrists
- Participate in a summer research opportunity

Junior Year – Year 3 - IF Applying to Start Optometry School after Senior Year

School Year

- Talk to a Pre-Health or Faculty Pre-Optometry Advisor, review readiness and timeline to apply
- Participate in PMED 300 Pre-Medical Education Seminar as a Guest
- Decide when to take the entrance exam – Late Spring/Early Summer – plan when you will study
- Research optometry programs for pre-reqs and other admissions requirements
- Identify who to ask for Letters of Recommendation (Fall)
- Brainstorm your personal statement and write draft by Spring
- By February, ask faculty for letters; follow-up with email and letter requirements for OptomCAS
- Review Optometry Medical College Application Service (OptomCAS)
- Keep participating in meaningful activities and maintain good grades
- Re-calculate your Sciences GPA

TIP: Focus on shadowing optometrists, service, leadership, and research if interested

Summer

- Submit Primary Application early – do not wait until September deadlines!
- Order transcripts to submit with Primary Application
- Check Letters received and upload to OptomCAS
- Complete Secondary Applications from individual schools by early fall
- Contact schools to check your file is complete – most schools will not interview until it is
- Consider your options if a vet school application is not successful the first time - Explore Gap Year options to be prepared

Senior Year – Year 4 – IF Applying to Start Optometry School *after* Graduation

Fall Semester

- Complete secondary applications
- Check your status in the application/admission process
- Continue to get good grades, pursue meaningful co-curricular and experiential activities
- Update individual schools on experiences completed after submitting primary application
- Research financial options for optometry school
- Interview at optometry schools; schedule a practice Interview with the Career Center once you have interviews scheduled

Spring Semester

- Follow rules of application and acceptances; know each school's requirements
- Make interim and final decisions about optometry school choice
- Notify schools not attending before deadline given
- Complete and submit IRS and financial aid forms

Junior Year – Year 3 - IF APPLYING AFTER SENIOR YEAR – (TAKING A GAP YEAR)

School Year

- Review your timeline with a Pre-Health Advisor; identify areas of your application that can be strengthened over the next four semesters (Fall)
- Enroll as a Guest Participant in PMED 300
- Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences
- Explore Gap Year options; volunteer, employment, research, academic, etc. and apply
- Continue to build faculty relationships
- Continue successful completion of pre-requisite courses

Summer

- Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences
- **TIP: By Year 4; have experience with animals, at least two shadowing experiences and be active in meaningful co-curricular experience**
- **If interested, have some research or plan to by the start of optometry school**

Senior Year – Year 4 - IF APPLYING AFTER GRADUATION – (GAP YEAR)

School Year

- Talk to a Pre-Health Advisor, review readiness and timeline to apply
- Enroll as a Guest in PMED 300
- Plan when to study for and take the entrance exam
- Research selection factors at vet schools; GPA averages, exam minimums, co-curriculars, requirements for shadowing
- Brainstorm your personal statement; write draft by Spring
- By February, ask faculty for letters; follow-up with email and letter requirements in VMCAS
- Review Optometry Medical College Application Service (OptomCAS) sections
- Continue participation in meaningful activities
- Explore and apply for Gap Year experience: employment, research, services, academic, etc.
- In May begin entering information into the OptomCAA application once it is open

Summer

- Submit Primary Application early – do not wait until September deadlines!
- Order transcripts to submit with Primary Application
- Check Letters received and upload to OptomCAS
- Complete Secondary Applications from individual schools by early fall
- Contact schools to check your file is complete – most schools will not interview until it is
- Follow up on your application status: Transcripts sent? Letters received? Uploaded to OptomCAS?
- Potentially, begin Gap Year experience after graduation, or prepare for a program in fall

GAP YEAR Following Graduation

Fall

- Begin post-baccalaureate or Special Master's program immediately following graduation, if pursuing academic enrichment
- Complete secondary applications; check your file is complete at each school
- Check your status in the application/admission process
- If you are in an academic program, get good grades
- Continue meaningful experiential activities; you can often UPDATE individual schools on additional experience after submitting your primary application
- Interview at vet schools; schedule a practice interview with the Career Center once your interviews are scheduled
- Research financial options

Spring

- Follow rules of application and acceptances; know each school's requirements
- Make interim and final decisions about vet school choice
- Notify schools not attending before deadline given
- Complete and submit IRS and financial aid forms

Summer before optometry school matriculation

- Prepare for optometry school enrollment – purchase books, make living arrangements, and attend orientation programs
- Follow-up on all financial aid forms and deadlines
- Take time to Relax. Congratulations!