PRE-OPTOMETRY RESOURCES

This handout is designed to provide students a general guide to applying to optometry programs. For further assistance, please schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor.

QUICK FACTS

Only a few schools offer degree programs for a **Doctor of Optometry (OD)**.
Here are some things for optometry applicants to consider:
- Applications usually require some combination of these materials: **minimum GPA, Optometry Admission Test (OAT) scores, letters of recommendation, a personal statement, a cover letter, a secondary application, and an interview**.
- The application process for optometry programs differs from that of medical schools. When reviewing school options, keep in mind that schools are extremely competitive.
- Pursue **recommended medical related courses** in addition to the required prerequisites. Also seek out **research opportunities with faculty.**
- The number of shadowing or observation hours **vary from program to program**, with some requiring specific hours, and others strongly suggesting them.
    - **You will need to visit the sites for each program you are applying to verify information.**
- **Visit the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)'s website for additional information on applications, shadowing opportunities, specific programs, and other FAQ's, https://optometriceducation.org/.**

APPLICATION SERVICES (OPTOMCAS)

Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS)
- Many schools require your application to be submitted through this system.
- An account has to be made to utilize this application service. **Familiarize yourself with the site, the applications themselves, and what materials are necessary for each application.**
- **Keep in mind that not all schools use OptomCAS!** Thoroughly read through each program's admission procedures.

OAT PREPARATION

Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is designed to assess your **science skills**, as well as your **reading comprehension** and **quantitative reasoning skills**.
- Be sure to take the test in enough time to make the application deadlines. **It is recommended you take the test early in the spring of your junior year.**
- You can take the test as often as you feel necessary. Your scores will remain valid for **three years**.
- **Kaplan** has a breakdown of the test and answers FAQs, https://www.kaptest.com/oat/what-is-the-oat.
- **Information about studying, cost, and applying for the test can be found at https://oat.ada.org/.**

APPLICATION ESSAY PREPARATION

Personal statements used to apply to schools through OptomCAS should be general and not program specific.
- Pay attention to the character count (including spaces) allotted for the essay.
    - OptomCAS allows for a **4,500 character limit.**
- OptomCAS asks that you **"Please describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your preparation for training in this profession, your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest in optometry, and your future career goals."**
- You should start writing your personal statement early, and follow the instructions listed carefully to ensure you follow all the parameters set.
- **Secondary applications are sent out by most optometry programs.**
    - They vary in information requested and could include **work history, detailed shadowing/observation experiences, or have question and answer prompts**, and most often require a fee.

COMMON PREREQUISITES

Principles of Biology I & II
Microbiology
Principles of Chemistry I & II
Organic Chemistry I
Biochemistry
English Composition I & II

Calculus I
Probability and Statistics
Introductory Physics I & II
Intro to General Psychology
Cellular and Molecular Physiology
Human Anatomy and Physiology

*This is not an exhaustive list. Please research each program's requirement, and please consult with your academic advisor prior to registering.

KEY NUMBERS

- Average GPA: **3.42**, Accepted Average: **3.54**
- Average OAT Score: **326**
- Average Minimum Observation/ Shadowing Hours: **10-40**

*Check with each individual school for their GPA and score requirements.
Keep in mind that **quality outweighs quantity when obtaining hours.

PRE-OPTOMETRY RESOURCES

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

When preparing for professional school interviews, it is important that you practice ahead of time.

- Utilize resources in **Handshake** and **book an appointment with a Career Advisor to further assist you.**
- **"Why do you want to be an optometrist?"** or **"Why our program?"** are common types of questions that you want to prepare for.
- Develop **in-depth responses** to interview questions that are specific to you and how you fit into the program you're applying for.
- There are different types of interviews for dental school such as **traditional interviews, group interviews, mixed multiple interviews (MMI)**; with MMI's becoming more popular.
- The **Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)** also has a page with **interview resources for optometry school applicants**
  - **https://optometriceducation.org/2014/09/16/the-optometry-school-admissions-interview-be-ready-if-you-get-the-call/**

RESOURCES

ASCO:
https://optometriceducation.org/
ASCO: Profile of the 2023 Optometry Entering Class:
https://optometriceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ProfEnteringClass2023.pdf
ASCO: The Optometry Admission Test (OAT):
https://oat.ada.org/
Georgia State Board of Optometry:
https://sos.ga.gov/georgia-state-board-optometry
Kaplan: What is the OAT?:
https://www.kaptest.com/oat/what-is-the-oat
OptomCAS:
https://www.optomcas.org/
OptomCAS: Applicant Data Report (2022-2023):
https://www.optomcas.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/OptomCAS-Applicant-Data-Report-2022-2023.pdf
OptomCAS: Applicant Login:
https://optomcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login
OptomCAS: Filling Out Your OptomCAS Application:
https://help.liaisonedu.com/OptomCAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Filling_Out_Your_OptomCAS_Application