

# Pre-Optometry

As primary eye care providers, doctors of optometry examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eyes and associated structures as well as diagnose related systemic conditions.

Optometrists examine the internal and external structure of the eyes to diagnose eye diseases like glaucoma, cataracts and retinal disorders; systemic diseases like hypertension and diabetes; and vision conditions like nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism and presbyopia. They also determine the patient's ability to focus and coordinate the eyes, to judge depth and to see color accurately.

They prescribe eyeglasses and contact lenses, low vision aids, vision therapy and medications to treat eye diseases as well as perform certain surgical procedures.

Optometrists work in private practices, multidisciplinary medical practices, hospitals, teaching institutions, research positions, community health centers and the ophthalmic industry. Optometrists can also build successful careers in the military, public health or government service.

There is a need for optometrists in all types of practice, particularly in the areas of pediatric and gerontological optometry. Practice opportunities exist throughout the U.S. with a particular need in rural areas.

Optometrists are required to complete a four-year post-graduate degree program to earn their doctor of optometry (O.D.) titles. The four-year program includes classroom and clinical training in geometric, physical, physiological and ophthalmic optics, ocular anatomy, ocular disease, ocular myotology, ocular pharmacology, neuroanatomy and neurophysiology of the vision system, color, form, space, movement and vision perception, design and modification of the visual environment, and vision performance and vision screening.

Unique to the educational requirements for optometrists is the advanced study of optics, the science of light and vision, and extensive training in lens design, construction, application and fitting.

Since optometrists are members of the primary health care team, optometric education also includes a thorough study of human anatomy, general pharmacology, general pathology, sensory and perceptual psychology, biochemistry, statistics and epidemiology.

After graduation from an accredited school or college of optometry, optometrists must successfully complete a state board examination to become licensed to practice in a particular state.

*The information above was taken from American Optometric Association (AOA),*

**American Optometric Association**  
243 N. Lindbergh Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63141  
(800) 365-2219 [Detailed staff phone list]

**American Optometric Association**  
1505 Prince Street, Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(800) 365-2219 [Detailed staff phone list]

You could also visit the web site at <http://www.aoa.org/?sso=y>

## Job Outlook

Employment of optometrists is projected to grow 27 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. Because vision problems tend to occur more frequently later in life, an aging population will require more optometrists. As people age, they become more susceptible to conditions that impair vision, such as cataracts and macular degeneration.

## Earnings

The median annual wage for optometrists was \$103,900 in May 2015. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$51,780, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$187,200.

## Educational Requirements

- The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. The OAT is sponsored by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) for applicants seeking admission to an optometry program. All schools and colleges of optometry in the United States, and the University of Waterloo, Canada require the OAT.
- Admission to optometry school is competitive.
- To be licensed, optometrists must earn a Doctor of Optometry degree from an accredited optometry school and pass a written National Board exam and a clinical examination.

*The information above was taken from U.S. Department of labor Bureau of Labor Statistics*

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/optometrists.htm#tab-5>

## Educational Programs

According to the American Optometric Association, there are 19 accredited schools and colleges of optometry in the U.S. and Canada. The closest school to Georgia is Nova Southeastern College of Optometry which is located at 3301 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314-7796, (800)-541-6682. Another school to consider within the 19 schools is:

- **University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Optometry**

Further information about optometric education can be found at the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry at [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org).

## B.S. Biology at VSU

Requirements for entry to the Optometry program include but are not limited to a year of biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, general physics, and microbiology; English; college mathematics; and other social science and humanities courses. Your Pre-Optometry advisor at VSU will keep you apprised of the latest developments and advise you of the necessary extracurricular activities needed for your application to the optometry program. Certain elective course may also be recommended by your advisor.

**For more information visit our website at <http://www.valdosta.edu/~rgoddard/advising/advising.htm#optometry>**