

Pre-Optometry Scheduling and Timelines

Scheduling of Optometry School Prerequisites

Pre-optometry students should complete the core science prerequisites before taking the OAT. This can be accomplished in different ways, with the two most popular schedules shown in Table 1. These plans chart the minimum science coursework for students on a pre-optometry track over the four years that students are expected to be at Mercer University. **Pre-optometry students must check the admission requirements of the individual optometry schools to which they are likely to apply and to adjust their personal plans accordingly.** Mercer University advisors recommend that during their first year, students create a personalized plan that includes the requirements of their major(s) and minor(s) and the admission requirements of their target schools, and takes into account the student's initial math placement.

A student's scheduling of these courses depends on factors such as a student's initial mathematics placement and the availability of required courses for the student's academic major. When arranging their course schedules, pre-health students are advised to plan ahead and review the published lists of Mercer University course offerings. This is important because not all of the required courses for a student's major and/or the pre-health track will be offered every semester, and a one-semester delay due to complications involving prerequisites could turn into a one-year delay in applying to professional school.

Math Placement. To enroll in chemistry and physics course sequences, a student must demonstrate a minimum mathematics competency that is equivalent to pre-calculus (MAT 133) or above; this competency may be demonstrated through credit (college, AP, or CLEP) for MAT 133 or its equivalent, or through a score of 15 or higher on the math placement test. Information about the math placement test can be found online here: <https://aas.mercer.edu/for-students/placement-exams/>. Regarding the CLEP exam for pre-calculus: A student who scores 50% or higher on the CLEP pre-calculus exam may submit his or her test official transcript to the Mercer registrar and receive MAT 133 credit. Information about the CLEP pre-calculus exam can be found here: <http://clep.collegeboard.org/exam/precalculus>.

Course Loads. The optometry school curriculum is quite rigorous, so admissions committees will look to an applicant's ability to carry a full academic load as s/he completes the undergraduate studies as an indicator of how well he or she might handle the professional school curriculum. Unless there are extenuating circumstances that prevent him/her from doing so (e.g., employment, family circumstances), a pre-optometry student is expected to take 15 to 17 hours each semester.

AP, IB, and CLEP Credit to Fulfill Science Prerequisites. An increasing number of medical schools do not accept AP, IB, or CLEP credit to fulfill the core science prerequisites. It is possible that optometry schools will follow suit, so students should check their preferred optometry programs for their policies on AP/ IB/ CLEP credit. In many cases, it is in the student's best interest to decline AP, IB, or CLEP credit for general chemistry, general biology, and physics, and take the actual college courses instead.

Table 1a. Scheduling of Science Prerequisites (Students Entering Mercer Fall 2023 and Beyond)

A. Math Index Below 980

Year	Fall	Spring	
1	MAT 095 or 133 BIO 131	MAT 133 or math for major BIO 132	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research
2	CHM 111 BIO 171	CHM 112 BIO 172	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research
3	CHM 221 BIO 260	CHM 222 BIO 280	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research
4	BMB 465? PHY 141 <i>Apply for May graduation if degree requirements on track</i>	BMB 465? PHY 142 <i>Prepare for OAT and application?</i>	Take admission exam & submit applications?
5	<i>Gap year or Matriculate to Optometry School</i>		

B. Math Index 980+

Year	Fall	Spring	Summer
1	CHM 111 BIO 171	CHM 112 BIO 172	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience
2	CHM 221 BIO 260	CHM 222 BIO 280	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience
3	PHY 141 BIO 131 BMB 465?	PHY 142 BIO 132 BMB 465? <i>Prepare for OAT and application</i>	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience Take OAT and submit applications
4	<i>Apply for May graduation</i>		
5	<i>Matriculate to Optometry School</i>		

Table 1b. Scheduling of Science Prerequisites (Students Entering Mercer Before 2023)

A. Math Index Below 980

Year	Fall	Spring	
1	MAT 095 or 133 BIO 131	MAT 133 or math for major BIO 132	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research
2	CHM 111 PHY 141	CHM 112 BIO 211	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research
3	BIO 212 CHM 221	PHY 142 CHM 222 <i>Prepare for OAT and application?</i>	Take admission exam & submit applications?
4	BIO 303 or BMB 465? <i>Apply for May graduation if degree requirements on track</i>	BIO 303 or BMB 465? <i>Prepare for OAT and application?</i>	Take admission exam & submit applications?
5	<i>Gap year or Matriculate to Optometry School</i>		

B. Math Index 980+

Year	Fall	Spring	Summer
1	CHM 111	CHM 112 BIO 211	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience
2	CHM 221 BIO 212 <i>Declare Major</i>	CHM 222 BIO 303	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience
3	PHY 141 BIO 131	PHY 142 BIO 132 <i>Prepare for OAT and application</i>	Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience Take OAT and submit applications
4	<i>Apply for May graduation</i>		
5	<i>Matriculate to Optometry School</i>		