

Academic Preparation for Optometry School

Minimum Required Coursework for Optometry School. Most optometry schools in the U.S. require a minimum of one year of English composition, one year of general chemistry (CHM 111 and 112), at least one semester of organic chemistry (CHM 221), at least one semester of general biology (BIO 171), one year of physics (PHY 141 and 142 or 161 and 162), and one semester of microbiology (BIO 303 – which has the prerequisites of BIO 172 and BIO 280). All science courses require a lab component. Most schools also one semester each of calculus (MAT 191) and statistics (STA 126), and at least one semester of a course in the social sciences. Some schools require human anatomy and physiology (BIO 131 and 132), while others require additional social sciences. Students on the pre-optometry track must investigate the different optometry schools available and make themselves aware of the particular requirements for the programs in which they are interested. The website of the centralized application service for optometry schools in the US, OptomCAS, offers a summary of the admissions prerequisites of their member schools here: <https://www.optomcas.org/information-about-schools-colleges/>.

Majors and Minors for Pre-Optometry Students. Most optometry schools in the U.S. prefer applicants who complete a bachelor's degree before they matriculate, but many do not express a preference for any particular academic major when reviewing applications. Although a pre-optometry student may major in any discipline s/he chooses, s/he must also complete the required courses for admission to their preferred optometry programs. Before officially declaring a major, therefore, a student should create a personalized 4-year plan (4YP) that includes all required coursework to see how well the two programs fit together. (Watch the video, *Creating a 4-Year Plan*, on the GPS advising course on Canvas.) Students need to be aware that extra semesters might be required for degree programs that do not fit well with the pre-optometry classes.

Minors in Chemistry & Biology. Pre-optometry students who select a non-science major are encouraged to at least minor in both Chemistry and Biology in order to obtain a firm foundation in the sciences.

Chemistry Minor: Students who complete 18 credit hours of chemistry (CHM 111, 112, 221, and 321), with 6 hr or more in courses numbered 200 or higher taken in residence at Mercer, fulfill the Mercer University College of Liberal Arts & Sciences requirements for a minor in chemistry.

Biology Minor: Students who complete 18 credit hours in biology, with 6 or more hr in courses numbered 300 or higher in residence at Mercer fulfill the CLA's requirements for a minor in biology.

Minors in Business: Many pre-optometry students see the value of education in a field of business, as such training can further their professional goals as optometrists operating in their own clinics. Options can be found in the University Catalog.

Optometry School Matriculation Without a Degree. Many optometry schools do not require a bachelor's degree for admission (e.g., <http://www.uab.edu/optometry/home/become-an-optometrist/application-process>; <http://optometry.nova.edu/od/admissions/index.html>; <https://optometry.uiw.edu/admissions/doctor-of-optometry/index.html>) but most schools give preference to applicants who have completed a bachelor's degree. Students interested in only completing the 90 credit hours required for admission to optometry school rather than completing a bachelor's degree must plan ahead carefully, as they would need to take the OAT and apply to professional school at the end of their second year of undergraduate study rather than at the end of their third year. Students are encouraged to have a back-up plan in place to use if early admission is not achieved (completion of a bachelor's degree and applying again).