
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY



PRE-OPTOMETRY PROGRAM GUIDELINES

*Department of Life, Earth, and Environmental Sciences
Canyon, TX 79016-0808*

2022

WTAMU HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Health Professions Advisory Committee is appointed by Dr. Kevin Pond, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences. This committee will be your guide, helper, ombudsman, and evaluator during your preparation for entrance into Dental School. The current members of the committee include:

Dr. Carolyn Bouma, Chairman (Advisor for Pre-Med. & Pre- PA.)
Department of Life, Earth, and Environmental Sciences
Office: ANS 341
Phone: 651-2569

Dr. Donna Byers (Advisor for Pre-Med., Pre-Dentistry and Pre-Optometry)
Department of Life, Earth, and Environmental Sciences
Office: ANS 344
Phone: 651-2574

Dr. Nabarun Ghosh (Advisor for Biology and Medical Technology)
Department of Life, Earth, and Environmental Sciences
Office: ANS 340
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Dr. Stephen Karaganis (Advisor for Pre-Physical Therapy and Pre-Occupational Therapy)
Department of Life, Earth, and Environmental Sciences
Office: ANS 339
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THE WTAMU PROGRAM

Our pre-professional programs are among the best in the state, graduating highly competitive candidates, with success rates at or above the state and national rates. We continually look for ways to improve our programs and therefore the probability of our students being admitted to professional schools. WT's small enrollment plays a significant part in the success of the pre-professional program, as well as the success of the University itself. Here at WTAMU students exist as individuals with faces and personalities, not just as numbers, as in some larger schools.

What is Pre-optometry at West Texas A&M University?

Pre-optometry is not a degree in itself. Most students who wish to pursue optometry school will complete a B.S. in Biology or Biochemistry. This includes a mixture of Biology, Chemistry, Math, Physics, and non-science courses which together fulfill the pre-requisites of Texas optometry schools and prepare applicants to take the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT). Your undergraduate program should prepare you for optometry school, provide you with a maximum of alternatives and give you a liberal education. In the event that your plans for optometry school change, you will still graduate with one of the strongest life sciences degrees, which can open doors to a number of careers in the health professions.

If you think you would like to pursue optometry school, you should seriously consider the following:

1. Once you have earned 30 credit hours, have your advisor submit a degree information form designating the Pre-Optometry (POPT) specialization.
2. Become familiar with the pre-requisites for optometry school and meet with your advisor every semester to discuss your progress, and be greenlighted.
3. Remember that Freshman year grades will count in your overall grade point average (GPA). It is important to do well in all academic courses, particularly in the pre-optometry courses.
4. You have only three years in which to prove to the optometry school admissions committees that you are qualified. You should apply at the end of your junior year.
5. In addition, it might be wise to remember on those nights when you would rather not study, that many prospective optometry students may have been defeated by a lack of good study habits and perseverance, resulting in a low GPA during the Freshman year (playing catch up is not what you want to do!).

Is it difficult to get into optometry school?

Yes! All professional schools are very selective. They are looking for individuals with high grades, high scores on admission tests, a desire to help their fellow man, the ability to communicate and the ability to accept responsibility, maturity, leadership, et cetera. However, this does not mean that you should give up and change your major. It just means that you should realize that you are going to have to work hard. Over 75% of WT students who applied to optometry school in recent years were accepted, showing that it can be done.

What major should you choose at WTAMU if you want to go on to optometry school?

Neither of the optometry schools in Texas require a specific undergraduate major. However, they do require a minimum number and kind of mathematics and natural science courses. Since the pre-requisites may vary from school to school, you should become familiar with the requirements of the specific schools to which you intend to apply.

Since there is approximately 48 to 50 semester hours of course work in Biology, Math, Chemistry and Physics, most persons interested in optometry school decide to major in Biology, Biochemistry, Biomedical Sciences or a combination of these.

What kind of non-academic endeavors would strengthen my application?

The admissions committees of professional schools would like to see you participate in activities which indicate 1) that you have leadership qualities, 2) that you are capable of getting along with people, and 3) that you really know something about the field in which you hope to have a career.

It's strongly recommended that you join organizations on campus that are in line with your interests, perhaps in your major or minor fields such as the Pre-Healthcare Club, Beta Beta Beta, a National Honorary Biology organization, or the Student Affiliate of the American Chemical Society. When available, attend various presentations by health professionals on campus or in the community. Finally, seriously consider working or shadowing in professional health care facilities such as a local dentist's office or in a local optometry clinic.

OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS

University of Houston College of Optometry

The University of Houston
505 J. Davis Armistead Bldg.
4401 Martin Luther King Boulevard
Houston, TX 77204-2020
713-743-2020
<http://www.opt.uh.edu/>

Apply through OptomCAS: Application begins July 1st through March 30th prior to the fall semester of intended entrance. Supplemental application materials and supporting credentials must be received by March 30th prior to the entering semester.

Rosenberg School of Optometry

University of the Incarnate Word
9725 Datapoint Dr., CPO 17
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-883-1190
Email: optometry@uiwtx.edu
<http://optometry.uiw.edu/>

The application cycle is typically July thru May and processed on a rolling basis as received. Complete the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) and apply through OptomCAS.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

	UHCO	RSO
Minimum Total Credit Hours Prerequisite	90	90
English Composition, Humanities, Social Sciences		2 courses each
Basic Biology with Labs (hr.)*	8	4
Advanced Biology (hr.)* [†] A & P, Adv.Physiology, Genetics, Cell Biology, Immunology, Histology, Neuroscience accepted	8	4
Microbiology with Lab (hr.)*	4	4
General Chemistry (hr.)*	8	8
Organic Chemistry (hr.)*	4	4
Biochemistry (hr.)*	3	3
Physics (hr.)*	8	8
Statistics (hr.) [‡]	3	3
Calculus (hr.)	3	3
Psychology	3	3

UHCO – University of Houston College of Optometry

RSO – Rosenberg School of Optometry

*Must be courses and fill the requirement for biological science majors (not Nursing or Public Health)

[†]Environmental science or biotechnology courses are not accepted

[‡]Must be taught in a math or statistics department

Must be completed with a C or better; Biology and Chemistry completed 5 yr. prior to application; Math, Statistics and Psych completed 10 yr. prior to application.

Note: Candidates applying to RSO without completing a bachelor's degree must also have 2 courses (6 semester hours) in Humanities, and 2 courses in Social Sciences. Ethics, College Math, and 8 hours of A & P are also strongly recommended.

Students applying to the University of Houston College of Optometry are required to complete their baccalaureate degree before matriculation for admission.

PREPARING TO ENTER OPTOMETRY SCHOOL

Optometry is the primary health care profession dedicated to caring for the visual system. More specifically, optometrists are concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of ocular anomalies. The Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) possesses the knowledge and skills to evaluate the refractive status of the eye. In addition, the optometrist plays a primary role in the selection, design, provision and adaptation of corrective measures for the preservation and improvement of the visual system. Part of the optometrist's role is to detect early signs of ocular, neurological, behavioral and systemic health problems and refer patients to appropriate specialists. Counseling patients about good health habits is yet another part of an optometrist's profession. Optometrists provide patient care in several environments: private offices; interprofessional group practices; health maintenance organizations and hospital outpatient clinics; or in conjunction with ophthalmologists in total care clinics.

There presently are 17 schools and colleges of optometry in the United States and Puerto Rico. The two Colleges of Optometry in Texas are University of Houston College of Optometry and Rosenberg School of Optometry at University of the Incarnate Word. The information provided here focuses on these schools since most students in the state will be primarily interested in an institution which caters to Texas residents. Students interested in gaining information about optometry programs other than the ones offered in Texas should write to the [Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#) or the [American Optometric Association](#). Links for both of these associations are given at the end of this section and on the Pre-Professional website, along with links to Colleges of Optometry in Texas.

Students may prepare for a career in optometry by consulting with practitioners and by enrolling in coursework which strengthens their academic foundation and satisfies the requirements for admission to the profession. Practical experience may be gained by working or shadowing with an optometrist or another professional health care provider.

Once in college, students are encouraged to consult with their health professions advisor and correspond with the office(s) of admissions of the optometry school(s). This will help ensure that the student enrolls in courses which provide the essential background for success in optometry school.

A minimum GPA of 2.7 is required for admissions consideration at the University of Houston College of Optometry. Competitive applicants, however, usually exceed the minimum GPA requirement, so it's advisable to maintain the highest GPA possible.

Applications are available from the Office of Student Affairs and Admissions of the University of Houston College of Optometry. Classes are selected to enter the professional program in the fall of each year. Applications and admissions-related documents are due May 1st of the year for which the student is seeking admission. Applications are accepted after May 1st but such "late" applications are considered only on a space-available basis. The Standardized exam score submission deadline is June 1st.

Letters of evaluation are a critical component of the University of Houston College of Optometry admissions process. Applicants have the option of having a health professions committee composite letter submitted on their behalf or of having three (3) faculty members provide evaluations on forms provided in the application packet.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prospective students are encouraged to visit or write for additional information from:

Office of Student Affairs and Admissions
University of Houston College of Optometry
4800 Calhoun
Houston, Texas 77204-6052
<https://www.opt.uh.edu/>

School of Optometry Admissions
University of the Incarnate Word
4301 Broadway, CPO 17
San Antonio, TX 78209
<http://optometry.uiw.edu/>

American Optometric Association (AOA)
243 N. Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, Missouri 63141
<https://www.aoa.org/?sso=y>

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)
6110 Executive Blvd., Suite 514
Rockville, Maryland 20852
<https://optometriceducation.org/>

Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS)
<https://www.optomcas.org/>

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT)

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a test for applicants seeking admission to colleges of optometry. It is designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. The extent to which the test results are used in deciding whether an applicant will be admitted to a college of optometry varies among the colleges. Colleges of optometry usually consider OAT results with other information, such as collegiate records (GPA), shadowing experience and references, in reaching admission decisions.

An applicant to a college of optometry is encouraged to take the OAT well in advance of intended entrance into professional school. The OAT is offered year round through Prometric Test Centers. It is suggested that an applicant take the test in spring, one year prior to entering optometry school, but no later than the fall of the year preceding the desired admission date.

The OAT is divided into four examinations: Natural Sciences (biology, general chemistry and organic chemistry), Reading Comprehension, Quantitative Reasoning and Physics. The entire test requires approximately four hours for administration. A set of sample tests titled Optometry Admission Test Preparation Materials is automatically sent to test registrants at no cost. The set contains copies of the four tests used in the OAT and provides test candidates with an opportunity to become familiar with the types of material included in the test as well as with the general outline and format of the various tests in the test battery.

The OAT is scored on a scale of 200 – 400, with 300 being the mean. Each section consists of multiple choice questions and each section is scored separately. Incorrect answers are not counted against you, so it's wise to complete every question whether or not you're certain of the correct answer. Relative success on the OAT can be gauged by the following:

BEST	390+	Top 10% - Highly competitive
BETTER	350 - 389	Top 25% - Competitive – Highly competitive
GOOD	300 - 349	Top 50% - Competitive – Less competitive
BELOW AVERAGE	299 - below	Least competitive

NOTE: RSO accepts the OAT, GRE, MCAT or DAT for admission.

More information regarding the OAT may be obtained at:

<https://oat.ada.org/>

<https://www.tests.com/OAT-Testing>

<https://leverageedu.com/blog/oat-test/>

<https://optometriceducation.org/future-students/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-optometry-admission-test-oat/>

YOUR PROGRESS AT WTAMU

Most important is to develop good study habits. Do as well as possible your freshman year. Your courses will be more difficult each year, so you shouldn't put yourself in the position of having to "play catch up." Concentrate especially on the science courses, they are looked at more closely than are others by admissions committees. Get involved in things besides your books, but remember why you are at WTAMU.

In order that the Health Professions Advisory Committee may get to know you to the degree necessary to evaluate you for professional school admissions committees, there are several things that you should do during the time that you are with us:

1. During your time at WT, get to know the members of the Committee.
2. Prior to requesting a letter of evaluation, provide the committee chairman with the following:
 - A personal statement or short write-up (one or two page) on why you want to become a doctor of optometry
 - Transcripts of all College and/or University work
 - Lists of awards, honors, teaching assignments, organization memberships, leadership activities and such information that would help the Committee evaluate your potential as a dentist
 - OAT scores as soon as they become available
 - A signed waiver of access to your evaluation files
3. Whenever you feel the need to talk with someone about any phase of your work or about almost anything else, please feel free to contact your advisor or any committee member.
4. Keep the Committee posted on how things are going after your applications are submitted. Let us know if anything is lacking from the Committee and how your interviews turn out.
5. Please advise us when your acceptance to optometry school is received. Then keep us informed during and after completion as to how you like what you are doing and any suggestions you have for advising pre-optometry students.

WE WISH YOU SUCCESS IN REACHING YOUR GOAL!!!