

## **SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY POLICY**

**Date Revised:** 12/2025

**Responsible Party:** Academic Affairs

**Contact(s):** Kristine Hopkins, OD, MSPH, FAAO, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

---

## **Policy on Electives**

### **Overview**

Electives are non-required courses designed to provide additional learning and experience for optometry students. Electives may be didactic, laboratory, clinical or research courses (or in combination) designed by faculty and must be approved by the curriculum committee, Dean's Group and Dean. Because of scheduling complexities and the limitations of resources and time, not all electives can be offered to every student. As interest, faculty resources and schedules permit, students may elect to complete one or more electives.

### **Recommended Policy on Electives**

**Definition.** An elective course is any non-required course broadly relating to vision science, basic health science or clinical care designed by one or more faculty that is offered to the students of the UAB School of Optometry.

**Purpose.** In conjunction with interested faculty, electives are designed to provide one or more optometry students with the opportunity to explore:

The charge of the Professional Program Admissions Committee is to determine criteria for admission, to promote the professional program, to recruit students for the professional program, to conduct candidate interviews and to make admissions decisions.

- Topics in greater depth;
- Special topics;
- A wider view or survey of selected areas;
- A review;
- Independent study;
- Special clinical or laboratory or learning techniques;
- Advanced study or clinical care;
- Research projects; or,
- Other areas of interest.

**Priorities.** The needs of the professional curriculum must be fulfilled before any electives may be scheduled. Electives shall not be considered for any student during regularly scheduled class time.

**Graduation Requirement.** Students are not required to complete an elective to meet graduation requirements. Elective courses are optional.

**Transcript Credit.** Semester hour credit shall be provided to any student satisfactorily completing an approved elective course.

# **UAB Optometry**

Grading. All grades for elective courses shall be Pass/Fail and therefore will not count in the calculation of a student's GPA. A failing grade shall be placed on a student's transcript for not satisfactorily completing an elective. The customary university withdrawal process shall govern requests to drop any elective course. Courses in the graduate program will provide grades according to the rules of the graduate school.

Substituting Electives for Professional Course Work. On rare occasions with prior permission from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean, optometry students who are concurrently enrolled in the graduate program may substitute an elective for a course in the professional curriculum. Ordinarily for this to occur, a review and positive recommendation from the curriculum committee to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean must be completed.

Externship Options for Graduate Students Enrolled in the O.D./M.S. Program. If a student elects to use an Externship term to conduct M.S. level thesis research, the student must obtain approval from the Director of the Graduate Program. Students may use a six-week summer externship term or an eight-week fall or spring externship term to complete M.S. thesis level research. Upon approval, the Director of the Graduate Program will notify the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the Director of Externships of the student's Externship choice by the end of the summer preceding their third year.

Scheduling of Electives. The curriculum committee is responsible for reviewing and recommending approval of a current list of electives on a yearly basis. Descriptions of the elective courses shall be posted on the School website. Students may register online for electives the semester prior to the semester the elective is offered. Electives may have a limited number of participants. Unless otherwise stated by the course director, students may register for an elective on a first come first serve basis when registration opens.

Faculty Issues, Release Time. Any faculty member may submit to the curriculum committee a potential elective course for approval. If at least five students are enrolled in an elective, a faculty member ordinarily may expect to receive time released from other activities during the term the elective is convened at the discretion of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. No faculty member will be compelled to provide an elective course.

Approval Process, Renewal & Time-table. Because of the necessary review of the course material and scheduling involved, electives must be submitted at least one full semester before it is to be offered to be included in the list for the upcoming academic year. Once a course is submitted and approved, the course will continue to be offered until it is withdrawn by the faculty member(s) involved. The approval process for an elective course consists of the following:

- Completion of the Elective Course Request form by the faculty member(s) wishing to teach the course (Appendix 1);
- Submission of the form to the curriculum committee;
- Review of the course materials and scheduling requirements by the curriculum committee and development of a recommendation for approval or disapproval to the Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; and,
- Review by Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Dean prior to approval or disapproval of the recommendation.

# **UAB Optometry**

**Dropping Elective Courses.** Procedures for dropping elective courses are in Appendix Two, Dropping Elective Courses.

**Auditing Elective Courses.** Students may choose to complete one or more electives for Pass/Fail credit. However, if approved by the faculty member offering the elective course, a student may audit an elective course without enrolling in the course and receiving a formal (Pass/Fail) grade.

**Research Electives.** Research electives that expose students to a topic or provide experience in research are encouraged. Students may work in a faculty member's laboratory or assist in any phase of projects of mutual interest to the student and the faculty.