

SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY POLICY

Date Revised: 1/22/2025

Responsible Party: Student Affairs

Contact(s): Connie Wright, Director of Student Affairs

Traditional Four-Year Optometry Degree Program Admissions Policy and Procedures

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.

Admissions Policy

For an application to be considered as complete, both the verified OptomCAS application and the UABSO supplemental application, with the \$75 application fee, must be received. Applications are reviewed only when both applications are present. In addition to the two admissions applications, applicants must complete a minimum of 90 semester hours or 135 quarter hours to include our prerequisite courses. Applicants must also complete the Optometry Admissions Test (or a comparable exam), submit three letters of recommendation or one composite recommendation, forward all academic transcripts as part of their OptomCAS application and be interviewed by a panel of Admission Committee members of the UAB School of Optometry.

Major and Credit Hour Requirements - A specific major is not required for admission to the UAB School of Optometry. Applicants must have completed a minimum of 90 semester hours or 135 quarter hours at an accredited college or university, which is the equivalent of three years of college education, prior to matriculation. All courses must be taken at a fully accredited institution and must be acceptable to that institution for degree credit and major requirements. No more than 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours earned at a two-year institution may be applied toward the credit hour requirement. Applicants scheduled to have a bachelor's degree at the time of matriculation are given preferential consideration over those who will not have their degree prior to matriculation.

College-level Prerequisite Courses - certain courses or their equivalents must be completed prior to matriculation. Applicants can submit an application before all prerequisite courses are completed. Candidates must complete all of the courses listed below with a grade of C or better, prior to the summer term of their matriculation year.

Prerequisite Courses:

- 1 year of general biology with labs
- 1 course of microbiology¹
- 1 course of biochemistry²
- 1 year of general chemistry with labs
- 1 course of organic chemistry with lab
- 1 year of general physics with labs
- 1 course of calculus
- 1 course of statistics³
- 1 year of English
- 1 course of general psychology³
- 1 year of social science⁴

One year is equal to two semesters or three quarters.

1. Bacteriology and virology are accepted as substitute courses for microbiology.
2. Molecular/cell biology is accepted as a substitute course for biochemistry.
3. A statistics course taken in a psychology department will not be counted for fulfillment of both the psychology prerequisite and the statistics prerequisite.
4. Any combination of two semesters or two quarters in courses such as sociology, economics, anthropology, history, political science or additional psychology courses.

Online and AP/CLEP Courses - Prerequisite courses taken online or credits via AP/CLEP courses are acceptable provided they are offered by an accredited college or university. Documentation of AP/CLEP courses should appear on the undergraduate transcript or through official score reports.

Ten (10) Year Prerequisite Course Policy - Due to ongoing advancements in scientific knowledge and practice, the Admissions Committee requires applicants to demonstrate current competence in all prerequisite science coursework.

If any science prerequisite courses were completed more than ten (10) years prior to the academic year of application, the applicant will be required to either:

1. Repeat the required course(s) at an accredited institution,
or
2. Submit compelling, well-documented evidence of recent and equivalent mastery in the applicable scientific discipline. This may include, but is not limited to, recent advanced coursework, professional experience in a related scientific field, certifications, or other verifiable demonstrations of up-to-date knowledge and skills.

All documentation submitted in lieu of repeated coursework will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Admissions Committee reserves the right to determine whether the submitted evidence sufficiently meets the current academic standards and expectations for entry into the program.

Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) - Suggested to take the exam during the spring/early summer of the year preceding anticipated application. If the results of the exam are considered to be unsatisfactory, the applicant will have the opportunity to repeat the exam during the summer/early fall of the application year. The exam can be retaken 60 days after the most recent test date. Other professional school entrance exams (MCAT, DAT, and GRE) may be considered on a case-by-case basis. If entrance exam scores are more than three (3) years older than the academic year of their application, the applicant will be required to retake the exam.

It is not necessary to take the OAT before applying. Interview invitations are extended to competitive applicants without OAT scores. However, admissions decisions cannot be made without OAT scores.

Letters of Recommendation - If available at the applicant's undergraduate institution, a composite evaluation by a pre-health professions advisory committee is preferred. One letter from an optometrist should be included in the composite evaluation. If the committee evaluation isn't available, the following letters are required; three individual letters, two should come from faculty members who are knowledgeable regarding the applicant's scholastic abilities and personal character and one from an optometrist with whom the applicant has shadowed and/or worked.

Transcripts - Official and complete transcripts of all course work attempted at colleges and universities must be forwarded to OptomCAS by the institutions attended. Supplementary transcripts must be forwarded to OptomCAS following completion of courses not included on the original transcripts. Updated transcripts following the completion of the spring and summer semesters of the applicant's matriculation year must be forwarded to the Student Affairs Office at the School of Optometry.

Interview Process – The director of student affairs will review all complete applications to determine who meets the criteria set by the admissions committee to receive an invitation to participate in either an in-person interview or a virtual interview as part of the selection process. Applicants may be invited for an interview any time during a period beginning in August and ending as late as April.

Additional Factors Considered by the Admissions Committee

Scholastic Aptitude and Performance - Successful completion of the optometry curriculum requires that a student be able to acquire a large amount of material in a limited time and have the ability to apply this material. In addition to the OAT scores and the overall college record, the UAB School of Optometry Admissions Committee considers whether students maintain or improve their performances as they progress to more advanced courses in their undergraduate curriculum.

Extracurricular Activities - Reasonable involvement in extracurricular activities is considered important. Community service and leadership qualities are also desirable.

Optometry-Related Experience - Applicants are required to explore the optometry field either by employment or in a volunteer/job shadow capacity for at least 40 hours.

Personality, Character and Motivation - The personal and social traits and other non-intellectual characteristics important for the future optometrist are very difficult to measure objectively. The committee relies heavily on the letters of recommendation and/or composite college evaluation, character recommendations and the interview for this information.

Selection Process - The UAB School of Optometry admits a target class size of 58 highly qualified students each year. Members of the Admissions Committee have the responsibility of reviewing and evaluating applications and selecting those who are the best qualified. Notices of acceptance may be received as early as August and as late as May. Applicants who are not accepted for one of the regular class positions may be accepted for an alternate/waitlist position. Those holding alternate positions may receive notification of admission to the class as late as the middle of August, should a regular position become available.

Acceptances are designated as conditional until successful completion of requirements. Included in the statement of missing requirement(s) is the completion of a favorable background check. All students admitted must maintain the level of academic performance consistent with that previously demonstrated. The Admissions Committee reserves the right to deny admission to an already admitted student whose academic performance falls below standards deemed appropriate for acceptance or in the case of an unfavorable background check.

Information for International Students Applying to the Traditional Program - To be considered for admission, international students must have the academic, linguistic, and financial abilities to successfully complete the professional program. International applicants must fulfill the same undergraduate academic requirements as United States applicants.

Foreign Transcripts- International applicants are required to submit official foreign transcripts to an approved foreign transcript evaluation service for a course-by-course U.S. equivalency report. The official evaluation should then be sent to OptomCAS. We highly recommend that you contact the foreign transcript evaluation service as early as possible. The service may take several weeks to process your foreign transcript once it is received. Below is a list of commonly used and accepted evaluation services.

- [World Education Services, Inc](#)
- [Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc](#)

Testing Requirements

All applicants must take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT). Other professional school entrance exams (MCAT, DAT, and GRE) may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

International students from non-English speaking countries are required to submit English proficiency scores (TOEFL/IELTS/PTEA) that meet our minimum score requirements.

TOEFL: 80*

TOEFL Essentials: 8.5

IELTS: 6.5

PTEA: 56

IELA: 176

Duolingo: 120**

***NOTE:** UAB does not accept My Best Scores from TOEFL. You will need to submit individual test date score reports to your application.

**** NOTE:** Some programs might require a higher minimum score if you are using Duolingo for the English proficiency requirement. Please reference the program's [admission page](#) to find out more.

We will only accept English proficiency scores that have been taken within a two (2) year period from the date that the application was submitted. Scores that exceed this time frame are considered expired and will not be accepted.

Applicants must contact the testing agency to have the official scores sent to the UAB Graduate School. TOEFL scores should be submitted to institution code 1856; Students do not need to send an official IELTS code and these scores are verified using the TRF code on the score report. PTEA results can be sent electronically to UAB through the testing website

English Proficiency Exam Waiver

We may waive the requirement according to the guidelines below:

The applicant has earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree in the United States with a GPA of 3.00 or higher.

The applicant is a citizen of one of the following countries:

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| Antigua | Kenya |
| Australia | Malawi |
| Bahamas | New Zealand |
| Barbados | Nigeria |
| Belize | Rwanda |
| Bermuda | Sierra Leone |
| Botswana | South Africa |
| Cameroon | Tanzania |
| Canada, with the exception of Quebec | Trinidad & Tobago |
| Cayman Islands | Uganda |
| Ghana | United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales) |
| Irish Republic | Zambia |
| Jamaica | Zimbabwe |

Visa Information - Students who are outside the US and admitted to the UAB School of Optometry must generally obtain an F-1 or J-1 student visa to enter the US to begin classes. Students coordinate any immigration document needs directly with UAB's Office of International Student & Scholar Services and then provide the link directly to the ISSS Newly Admitted Students page here

<https://www.uab.edu/global/students/international-students/newly-admitted-students>

International Student and Scholar Services

Melvin H. Sterne Library

917 13th Street South

Birmingham, AL 35294

Telephone (205) 934-3328

iss@uab.edu

This policy is reviewed annually by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs/Admissions Committee Chairperson, and the Director of Student Affairs to ensure alignment with institutional goals, accreditation standards, and best practices. Proposed changes to the policy must be reviewed and approved by the Admissions Committee and the Dean's Group.