



STUDENT HANDBOOK

The UAB School of Optometry is committed to
understand, preserve, restore, and enhance vision,
eye health, and quality of life.

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Our Vision, Mission, Values and Goals

Our Vision

The UAB School of Optometry is committed to understanding, preserving, restoring, and enhancing vision, eye health, and quality of life.

Our Mission

The mission of the UAB School of Optometry is to educate optometry students, residents, and future vision scientists; discover and communicate new knowledge in eye care and vision research; translate these ideas into clinical practice; and provide care to the community with integrity and compassion.

Our Values

UAB and UABSO Shared Values: We C.A.R.E.

UABSO Values are adapted from UABSO Values 2019-2023 and UAB Values 2024-2028.

- **Collaborate:** Building relationships on the foundation of cooperation that fosters unity towards a common goal.
- **Act with integrity:** Committing to honest, trustworthy, and ethical behavior.
- **Respect:** Improving our community by investing our time and talents with compassion and respect towards all.
- **Excellence:** Exhibiting high achievement in all that we do.

Our Goals

Goal 1

To identify, train and cultivate highly competent and ethical Doctors of Optometry who possess the foundational knowledge, clinical skills, and commitment to patient care necessary to excel in the evolving field of optometry.

Goal 2

Involve faculty and students in evidence-based and interdisciplinary scholarship and research that contributes to innovation, discovery and communication of new knowledge in eye care and vision science.

Goal 3

Engage the community through activities that involve students, faculty, and staff in teaching, service, and public education to increase awareness of ocular conditions, and how eye health reflects systemic health.

Goal 4

Support faculty and staff to reach their full potential, leading to greater job satisfaction and an environment that emphasizes shared values.

Goal 5

Maintain a successful Vision Science graduate program, optometric residency programs, and combined degree programs (OD/MS, OD/MBA, and OD/MPH) that provide development and learning opportunities.

Goal 6

Sustain a balanced budget and provide sufficient resources, including technology in the clinic, classroom, and research settings to cultivate an environment that supports excellence in learning, patient care, research, and service.

UABSO DIRECTORY

UAB General Information	Campus Directory	http://www.uab.edu/phonebook	934-4011
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UAB CONTACTS

Financial Aid	Jennifer Abell	Jmm8915@uab.edu	934-8223
Student Account Services	Financial Affairs	FA-Studacct@uab.edu	934-3570
Student Health	Taylor Stewart	taylormendola@uabmc.edu	975-7751
Student Dental Health			934-5234
Transportation Services	Parking Permits	transportation@uab.edu	934-3513
UAB Police	Public Safety /Security	UABPD-PoliceDept@mail.ad.uab.edu	934-4460
UAB Registrar's Office	Academic Records	registrar@uab.edu	934-8222
UAB Eye Care	UABSO Clinic	hello@uabeyecare.com	975-2020

UABSO CONTACTS

OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dr. Gerald Simon	Associate Dean	gsimonod@uab.edu	975-0739
Connie Wright	Director	csewell@uab.edu	975-0739
Delia Lewis	Assistant Director	Dlewis1@uab.edu	934-2859
Jakobe Perry	Student Success	Perryjm@uab.edu	975-0153
Austin Keel	Recruitment and Events	Austink@uab.edu	934-5710

EXTERNSHIP OFFICE

Dr. Candice Turner	Director	citurner@uab.edu	
Cynthia Perry	Program Coordinator	cmbb11@uab.edu	934-2624

RESIDENCY PROGRAM OFFICE

	Director	Cbeesley@uab.edu	
Dr. Caroline Pate	Program Coordinator	Rclemons@uab.edu	934-4748
Dena Clemons			

DEAN'S OFFICE

Misty Cuthbert	Executive Assistant	mcuthbert@uab.edu	975-9935
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DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Sommer Thompson	Senior Director	sommer.thompson@uab.edu	934-9838
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ALUMNI AFFAIRS OFFICE

Amy Drinkard	Program Manager II	amyrie@uab.edu	975-9931
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INFORMATION SERVICES

AskIT	Askit@uab.edu	996-5555
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STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Mailboxes are located in the student lounge on the first floor. Mail will be placed in student mailboxes and must be checked at least once per day. The mail will be distributed throughout the day. Campus and U.S. mail will be delivered once a day. Students are not allowed in the first-floor mailroom.

Student Lockers are located on the third floor.

There are **refrigerators and microwaves** located in the lounge on the first and third floors. It is the responsibility of the student organization members to keep the refrigerators and microwaves clean. Students should note the monthly assignment list on the refrigerator. Paper towels are provided to cover food while using the microwave.

The **Student Computers** are located on the 3rd floor in the student lounge.

Notary Public: Dena Clemons in clinic administration on the ground floor can provide this service. Most local banks will be able to notarize a form for a small fee. Notary services are often available at One Stop Office in the Hill Student Center.

Transcripts: Official and unofficial transcripts must be requested online through BlazerNET or at the One Stop Office.

Student Emergency: If a student is injured or becomes ill, the contact information entered in BlazerNet will be used to notify the emergency contact. Therefore, at least two family contacts should be entered in BlazerNet.

Family Emergency: If a student is listed as the “emergency contact” for any family member(s), they should supply the family member’s employer or school with their personal and direct contact information as well as contact information of local family members (or close friends) that can handle an emergency in the student’s absence.

Loan Deferments, Insurance Forms, or Verification of Enrollment Letters: Requests should be made in writing to the Office of Student Affairs - no verbal requests will be accepted. Students should include the name of the company, the company’s address, a contact person’s name, and the email address for the company. Students should provide any official forms to be completed with the written request and ensure that all sections of the form(s) have been completed.

Intern Attendance and Absence Guideline for clinic: Located in Section 7 of the UAB Eye Care Clinic Manual located in UAB Eye Care Canvas. Absence requests are submitted in Meditrek.

Frequently used Forms:

Student Absence Forms: Can be obtained online at <http://www.uab.edu/optometry/home/student-resources>.

Emergency Loan Application Forms: Can be obtained online at <http://www.uab.edu/optometry/home/student-resources>. Upon completion of the Emergency Loan Request Form, return the form to the Office of Student Affairs.

STUDENT EMAIL USAGE

The UAB email account established for each student is the only account used for official communications with students. Students should not expect UABSO faculty, staff, or administration to use any other email accounts. Students can direct their UAB account to forward communications to any other email server of the student's choosing, but under these circumstances the School of Optometry cannot be responsible for any lost or misdirected emails. E-mail must be checked by the student at least once per day.

What is the best way to communicate with faculty and staff? Email

If a student has a problem with their email account, who should they contact? Contact AskIT at askit@uab.edu or 205-996-5555.

Should students open an email with an address beginning with "GRP-so"? Yes, these e-mails are sent to a specific class or the entire student body and contain important information. It is the best way for the staff and faculty to communicate with student groups.

Students Should Avoid:

- Ignoring e-mails sent to everyone
- Opening SPAM or any suspicious e-mail
- Deleting important messages (instead, save them in a folder)
- Getting behind on email messages

LAPTOP REQUIREMENTS

The minimum laptop requirements and recommendations can be found at [TechConnect - School of Optometry](#). Privacy screen covers are required for exams.

BLAZERNET

Students are responsible for updating the following information in BlazerNET:

Address – a local mailing address is necessary.

Cell and Home Phone Numbers - faculty and staff on occasion have important information to relay to the student that requires a phone call

Emergency Contacts – Students should enter two or more emergency contacts in the event they are injured or become ill while attending school.

BlazerNET is designed for the internal UAB community providing centralized access to the information and services that students, faculty and staff need daily. A few things students can find on BlazerNET:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| • Class Registration | • Events | • News |
| • Grades | • Policies | • Transcript Request |
| • Financial Aid | • Forms | |

LISTER HILL LIBRARY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES

Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences is a primary resource for medical reference materials:

- Connect from home to the library's resources, including full text
- Find Books and Journals in the library's catalog
- Find Journal Articles related to optometry in MEDLINE
- Get Images and Pictures for class projects

There are **COPY MACHINES** available for student use at the Lister Hill Library. Students can check with the Information Desk for prices on color and black and white copies.

Lister Hill hours are:

Monday-Thursday

7:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Friday

7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday

9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Sunday

12:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Lister Hill Library Information Desk: 205-975-4821

Lister Hill Library can only be accessed with a Blazer ID. This library is only open to students and employees of UAB and other local universities. It is also open to state health and legal professionals.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

Optometry Student Immunization Policy

<http://uab.edu/studenthealth/medical-clearance/dentistry-medicine-optometry>

Students matriculating or enrolled in the School of Optometry must comply with the UAB University policy. The information on the web site is kept up to date. Students should refer to the site for details on all required immunizations.

Medical Clearance

All medical clearance is processed through the UAB Student Health Services. Students may contact Student Health Services with questions at 205-975-7751 or 205-975-7753.

MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE

Health Insurance is required for all students enrolled in the schools of Dentistry, Health Related Professions, Medicine, Nursing and Optometry. Students will be automatically enrolled unless they sign a waiver and provide proof of coverage under another plan. This is mandatory per university policy. [Insurance Requirement Overview | Students - Health](#)

MANDATORY HIPAA TRAINING

Optometry students must complete online HIPAA training (<https://www.uab.edu/compliance/areas-of-focus/privacy/training>) during orientation prior to beginning optometry school.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

During any actual emergency or severe weather situation, this site -- [uab.edu/emergency](https://www.uab.edu/emergency) -- will be the official source of UAB information. In addition, the UAB Emergency Management Team will use B-ALERT, the university's emergency notification system, to communicate through voice calls, SMS text messages and e-mails to the entire campus all at the same time. B-ALERT also integrates with Facebook and Twitter.

The UAB Severe Weather & Emergency Hotline at 205-934-2165 also will be updated as appropriate to provide official updates on the university's and UAB Hospital's opening and closing status.

To register for B-ALERT or update existing information in the system, go to [uab.edu/balert](https://www.uab.edu/balert). All registration is connected to a student's BlazerID. In a situation where the University is not officially closed, students experiencing problems (flooding or impassible roads, etc.) should report in the following manner:

- Didactic Courses: E-mail professors and copy Student Affairs
- Clinic Assignments: If scheduled for the clinic, follow the procedure delineated in the Clinic Manual.

Remember – our first priority is student safety. Students should remember to keep important phone numbers at home or look them up on the UAB website in the UAB Electronic Phonebook.

STUDENT SERVICES

To support students' academic, physical, and emotional well-being while enrolled in the professional program, the University and the UABSO offer numerous support services. Details regarding these services are provided to students during New Student Orientation and on the posted Student Resource List located throughout the school building.

Peer Tutor Labs

Academic progress is supported by Peer Tutor Labs. The Peer Tutors are student members of the honor society Beta Sigma Kappa. The labs are open Monday-Thursday evenings starting the second week of the fall and spring semesters. Summer tutor labs are offered two nights a week, based on the availability of the tutors. Additional sessions may be scheduled during periods of peak usage. The tutor labs are free of charge. Students on academic probation are offered a personal tutor, up to two hours a week to supplement their attendance to the weekly tutor labs.

Faculty Mentor/Advisor

Upon matriculation, each student is assigned a faculty mentor/advisor who offers ongoing guidance and supports the student's academic and professional development.

Mental Health and Wellness Support

Confidential mental health services are available to students through UAB Student Counseling Services. In addition, UABSO Student Affairs staff include a Student Life and Success Manager, and an Assistant Director (Associate Licensed Counselor (ALC) for Clinical Mental Health Counseling) who promotes wellness and offers support to students.

Campus Resources

Student Health Services – Comprehensive primary health care services (all health service visits, labs, tests and procedures are billed through insurance)

Student Counseling Services – Individual and group mental health services, prevention and outreach programming, crisis and emergency support, and consultation services (there is a psychiatric nurse practitioner on staff) – services provided at no extra cost

Wellness Promotion – Prevention of interpersonal violence through education and awareness, and a Collegiate Recovery Community for students in active recovery from alcohol and substance abuse – free services provided

UAB University Recreation Center – Offers an aquatic center, fitness center, studio space, climbing wall, gym courts, indoor track, group fitness classes, massage therapy, fitness and health assessments, and personal training

Blazer Kitchen – UAB's Food Pantry designed to address food insecurity amongst UAB employees, students and referred patients

Blazer Express – Provides transportation across the UAB campus and medical district; students can enjoy fare-free bus transportation along designated routes

UAB Safety Escort – Late night, on-demand van service for UAB students and employees from 9:00pm-5:30am every day

Motorist Assistance Roadside Service (MARS) – A free service available to all visitors, students, and employees parking on campus who need help with a dead car battery, putting air in a flat tire, retrieving keys locked in a car, etc.

UAB Police Department – Committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all students, faculty, staff, patients, visitors and guests through crime prevention, problem resolution and community involvement. In case of an emergency call 205-934-3535 or 911.

Disability Support Services (DSS) – Students can register with DSS for accommodations due to a disability (e.g. ADHD, Diabetes, mobility assistance)

International Student Services – Immigration advising and cultural exchange events for international students

Off-Campus Student and Family Engagement – Assistance with housing

[UAB Child Development Center](#) – Managed by KinderCare, providing childcare from 6 weeks to 5 years

[Veterans Services](#) – Assisting veterans, service members, dependents, and survivors

[One Stop Student Services](#) – Assistance with academic records (transcripts), financial aid, registration, student accounting, and ONE card

FINANCIAL AID

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Financial Aid Office provides information and guidance to all students to help them understand how to make clear decisions for financing their education, manage their debt, and repay their student loans.

The primary role of the Financial Aid Assistant Director is to be responsible for administering federal, state, and institutional programs in order to fulfill federal and state requirements as well as **serve as the liaison for the School of Optometry**, Heersink School of Medicine, and the School of Dentistry. This includes being the direct point of contact, and participating in professional school interviews, orientations, and committees.

Responsibilities also include:

- Process the health professional schools' scholarships (not endowed scholarships) and student loans.
- Provide personal counseling, information, and guidance to students concerning financial assistance programs.
- Process updates and changes according to student and program needs for administering financial aid awards and disbursements.
- Conduct financial aid presentations for program orientations as well as various UAB events.
- Maintain a current working knowledge of federal regulations by attending regular training, conferences, and continuing communication with other aid professionals is required.

ACADEMIC POLICY FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAM (Doctor of Optometry)

Approval Date: 09/12/23

This version of the policy supersedes all prior versions.

Grading System

All School of Optometry courses (didactic and clinical) will use the following letter grades and corresponding percentages:

- A 90-100%**
- B 80-89%**
- C 70-79%**
- F below 70%¹**
- P Pass**
- I Incomplete**

¹ In addition to other course criteria as set by the course director/instructor.

The temporary notation of “I” may be reported at the discretion of the instructor to indicate that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen circumstances, has been unable to finish all course requirements. An incomplete is given when the student, for non-academic reasons beyond his/her control, is unable to complete course requirements. This notation should not be used unless there is reasonable certainty that the requirements will be completed during the subsequent academic term, since at the end of that term the Incomplete automatically changes to an F.

In highly unusual circumstances the student may request an extension of the time to complete the requirements. This request must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs prior to when the grade automatically changes to an F. The approval of the instructor, the Professional Program Academic and Honor Council (PPAHC), the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Dean of the School of Optometry may be required.

W	Withdraw
WP	Withdraw Passing
WF	Withdraw Failing
AU	Audit
P/F	grading policy will be determined by the instructor

The grade point average is calculated by dividing the total number of quality points attained by the total number of semester hours attempted. The number of quality points attained for each course is determined by multiplying the earned quality points by the semester hour value of the course.

Academic Term

The academic year consists of the following terms: Fall A, Fall B, Fall, Spring A, Spring B, Spring, Summer I, Summer II, and Summer. The academic year begins in the fall and ends after summer term, at which time promotion to the next sequential year occurs.

Program Length

Students are expected to complete the professional optometry program in four academic years. Due to extenuating circumstances, including repeating a year, and other restrictions of academic probation, students may require more than four academic years to complete the program. The maximum time allowed to complete the professional program is six years (**72 months**) from the date of a student's beginning of classes. In highly unusual circumstances, the student may request an extension of the time to complete the professional program. This request must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs followed by approval by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Dean of the School of Optometry are all required.

Promotion/Graduation

Students who have an annual and cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or greater, without rounding, who have successfully completed all courses within an academic year, and who have a satisfactory record of professional conduct will be promoted to the succeeding year or will be eligible to graduate from the professional program if in the final year. In order to progress from the spring semester to the summer semester, prerequisites require that each student has successfully completed all courses in the professional program curriculum up to and including the spring semester, unless otherwise required by the Professional Program Academic and Honor Council (PPAHC). Each course in the program must be successfully completed for a student to receive the O.D. degree. Demonstration of acceptable professional standards and ethical values,

as defined by the UABSO Code of Ethics and the document entitled Core Competency for Entry-Level Optometrists (pg 42), are required for graduation.

Enrollment Status

A student's enrollment status may change after the failure of a course or clinic. Academic leave may be necessary to repeat the course when it is next offered. The PPAHC may recommend a clinical technician position in the interim to prevent the loss of clinical skills during leave period. Student should refer to the School of Optometry Leave of Absence Policy (page 35) for more information regarding enrollment status and withdrawals.

Professional Program Academic and Honor Council

The Professional Program Academic and Honor Council (PPAHC) is charged with monitoring the academic status of students enrolled in the UABSO and enforcing the School of Optometry's Academic Integrity Code. The PPAHC will meet on a regular basis, as needed, primarily at the end of each academic term. The PPAHC will review grades, performance of students on academic probation, material from course directors regarding failures in their courses and student documentation pertaining to a failure of a course (only after the student has been informed of the failure by the course director). The course director should communicate the failure of his/her course to the student by the date on which grades are due for that term. The course director will advise students of the method by which a course failure will be communicated. The course director shall also provide written notice of a course failure to the PPAHC chairperson, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the Director of Student Affairs, by the date on which grades are due for that term, absent extenuating circumstances.

For any F grade issued, the course director will provide the PPAHC with a written summary of the student's performance with a recommendation to the PPAHC. If an F grade is received in a clinical course, the course director may ask the instructor(s) assigned to the student for input when drafting the summary and recommendation. Factors used to determine the appropriate course of action for the management of an F grade include, but are not limited to, the following: overall course performance, current and past academic performance, attendance, demonstrated efforts toward self-help and documented special circumstances that may have contributed to poor performance, such as personal or family illness. If a student believes that extenuating circumstances contributed to a failing grade, an appeal letter documenting such factors should be submitted to the Chairperson of the PPAHC, prior to the committee meeting. All students with their academic status under review by the PPAHC will be invited to present their case in person or via Zoom at the PPAHC meeting when the case is discussed.

In the event that a member of the PPAHC is the course instructor who issued a failing grade, the member will recuse himself/herself and will refrain from voting on the committee recommendation for that student.

The PPAHC will make a ruling by vote regarding the promotion, probationary status, course repetition, course remediation and/or dismissal of the student. The course instructor who assigned the F grade will not move forward with his/her recommendation or re-examine the student, until after the PPAHC has evaluated the student's overall performance and determined the appropriate action, absent extenuating circumstances.

Any decisions involving academic actions will be conveyed to the student by the Office of Student Affairs. An attempt will be made to notify the student in person, but if this cannot be accomplished in a timely manner, the student may be notified by telephone, UAB e-mail or certified mail. The contact information for the student will be taken from Banner, the University's student database.

Repeating a Failed Course

All didactic and clinical courses for which an F grade is assigned must be repeated successfully for a student to progress in the professional program or to receive the O.D. degree. Based on the course director's written summary and ruling of the PPAHC, a failed course may be repeated, at the discretion of the course director, by either:

1. enrolling in the course when it is next offered

Students required to enroll in the course when it is next offered may be given the option to take an adjusted schedule of courses during the year before the failed course is repeated. Courses allowed will be those that do not require the failed course as a prerequisite, and that are deemed by the PPAHC to be in the best interest of the student. Adjusted schedules may be allowed. When a student is away from the program for a semester or more, additional customized requirements may be recommended by the PPAHC, including but not limited to repeating courses, auditing courses, remediation and examination.

or

2. completing an alternate repeat course in place of the original course

Didactic Courses

The requirements of the alternate repeat course may include, but are not limited to self-study, written assignments, periodic meetings, re-testing, and/or assignments designed to improve understanding of course content.

Clinic Courses

In some cases, the course director may recommend an alternate repeat clinical course in place of a failed clinic course. If this is offered, the alternate repeat course may include but is not limited to: patient care assignments with faculty observation/supervision of specific techniques or conditions, case reviews, written assignments, periodic meetings and/or other activities designed to improve clinical performance.

If the course director offers an alternate repeat course, he/she will usually serve as the course director and will determine the course requirements, grading and scheduling of the course. The course director may also suggest an alternate appropriate course outside of the school to the PPAHC chair or Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Additional provisions may be suggested by the PPAHC in consultation with the course director who assigned the original F grade. The grading scale used for the alternate repeat course should be identical to that of the course failed. A course syllabus specific to this course will be provided to the student by the course director. Special courses that are created for these purposes for a specific student will be given a new course grade and extra tuition may be applied. The assigned course director/instructor(s) for alternate repeat courses will provide the course syllabus and regular feedback regarding the student's performance in the course to the PPAHC, which will review the performance and make further recommendations, as appropriate. Due to the complexity of an adjusted schedule, a student who has failed a course will not always be eligible to enroll in the next sequential academic term.

When a student successfully repeats a failed course, he or she will receive a grade and course credit for the repeated course, based on the repeat course requirements. The F grade from the course failed will remain on

the student's transcript, and both grades will be used in all grade point average calculations. Repeat/alternate repeat courses could significantly delay progression in the program and the graduation date. When a repeat course is failed, the student will receive an F grade and will be subject to dismissal from the program. In cases of extenuating circumstances, the PPAHC may allow a student to remediate a repeat course F grade while on academic performance probation.

Remediation

Mid-Semester Remediation

Remediation may occur in a course when an instructor has recognized deficiencies that can be corrected within the term. The course director may design a program, in addition to the original course, to address deficiencies.

Post-Semester Remediation

Students failing a course at the end of the academic term may be allowed to complete a remediation course as outlined in the course syllabus and consistent with the academic policy and at the recommendation of the PPAHC. Students enrolling in a remediation course will be issued an "incomplete" until the requirements of the remediation are finished. The remediation course will be designed by the course director/instructor with guidance from the PPAHC to retest the student's deficient skills and/or allow the student to demonstrate mastery or proficiency of the course content. The remediation course should be limited in scope and not intended to retest the entire course content. Requirements for passage of the remediation course must be clearly outlined by the course director and shared with the student and the PPAHC.

Didactic Remediation: Remediation may include, but is not limited to self-study, written assignments, periodic meetings, re-testing, and/or assignments designed to improve understanding of course content.

Clinic Remediation: Remediation may include, but is not limited to patient care assignments, with faculty observation/supervision of specific techniques or conditions, care reviews, written assignments, periodic meetings, and/or other activities designed to improve clinical performance.

The duration of the remediation course cannot extend beyond the first two weeks of the subsequent semester. Students successfully completing the remediation course before the end of the second week of the subsequent semester will be issued a passing grade for the previously incomplete course. Students failing the remediation will be issued a failing grade for the original course and subject to the consequences of course failure outlined in the Academic Policy. Student failure or passage of the remediation course will be communicated to the PPAHC within 5 days. Due to the complexity of such special programs and schedules, students may not always be eligible to enroll in the next sequential academic term, and remediation could delay progression in the program and/or a student's graduation date. The need for remediation may prevent the student from attending an externship program. If a student who is on academic performance probation fails a remediation course, he/she may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Repeating an Academic Year

Circumstances that can subject a student to repeating all or part of an academic year include but are not limited to:

- One F grade while on academic performance probation, regardless of GPA.
- Annual GPA below 2.0 at the end of the summer term.

Students repeating an academic year may be required to repeat all courses in that academic year in which a C grade or less was originally earned, as well as any other courses which the PPAHC feels are in the best interest of the student. When a student is away from the program for a semester or more, additional customized requirements may be recommended by the PPAHC, including but not limited to repeating courses, auditing courses, remediation and examination. In the event that a curricular change has created a relocation of a course to a different academic year, efforts will be made to allow the student to take the course at an alternate time. Other curricular recommendations may be made by the PPAHC. The length of academic probation for students repeating an academic year will be determined by the PPAHC. Repeating an academic year will delay progression in the program and the graduation date.

Academic Probation

Academic Performance Probation

Circumstances resulting in academic performance probation include, but are not limited to:

- One F grade, regardless of GPA
- GPA below 2.0

Academic performance probation is a warning to the student that he/she must show substantial improvement to avoid repetition of the year or dismissal from the professional program. While on academic performance probation, a student will not be allowed to hold leadership positions in his/her class, the school, university, or other organizations supported by, or in association with, UABSO. Participation in extracurricular activities associated with the UABSO may be limited. This may include, but is not limited to, participation in class, school and university activities, state, regional and national organization meetings, conferences, and school-sponsored mission trips. Fourth year students may not be permitted to participate in externship rotations while on academic performance probation, unless they are repeating the fourth year and the PPAHC feel that externships are within the best interest of academic development of the student. This may delay the student's graduation date. The PPAHC will recommend the length of academic performance probation based on individual circumstances.

When a student is placed on academic performance probation, they will meet periodically with a faculty mentor during the probation period. The role of the mentor is to provide encouragement and guidance to the student. The mentor will not be held accountable for the success or failure of the student. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all requirements are met for the successful completion of the professional program.

Academic Conduct Probation

Academic conduct probation can be applied as a result of violations of the [UABSO Academic Integrity Code](#). Academic conduct probation is a warning to the student that he/she must maintain an acceptable level of conduct in UABSO and the university community in order to avoid repetition of a course or a year or dismissal from the professional program. While on academic conduct probation, a student will not be allowed to hold leadership positions or participate in any extracurricular activities supported by, or in association with, the UABSO. This may include, but is not limited to, participation in class, school and university leadership positions, state, regional and national organization meetings, conferences, and school-sponsored mission trips. A student may be judged unacceptable for promotion or be dismissed when the student has displayed repeated lack of professionalism with respect to the management of patients or in interactions with other

students, staff, or the faculty. These factors, among others, may be treated equally in importance with other academic standards in that they reflect the developing capacity to deliver a high standard of health service.

Dismissal from the Program

A recommendation for dismissal from the program may be made by the PPAHC if sufficient evidence exists to indicate that a student will not be able to correct past academic deficiencies or to meet the standards described in the document entitled Core Competency for Entry-Level Optometrists (pg 42), within the time period allowed to complete the professional optometry program. Once a student has been dismissed from the program, future requests for readmission to the UAB School of Optometry will not be considered.

Academic circumstances that can subject a student to dismissal from the professional program include, but are not limited to:

- Two or more F grades in the same term, regardless of GPA or academic probationary status
- One or more F grades received while repeating all or part of an academic year
- A failing grade while on academic performance probation
- A failing grade and subsequent failure of an alternate repeat course

Note that if the PPAHC stated in writing, in a previous term review, that any additional F, even in a non-repeat course, will bring dismissal from the program, the recommendation of the PPAHC will automatically be for dismissal.

Auditing

The PPAHC may recommend that a student audit one or more courses previously taken in addition to repeating a failed course or academic year. The student must notify the Office of Student Affairs with their list of desired courses to audit. A student who is permitted by an instructor to audit a course must officially register for that course through the Banner system and must notify the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Director of Student Affairs, the PPAHC Chair, and the course director/instructor at least 45 days before the course begins. Students who are auditing a course will participate in the same activities and will have the same course requirements as students officially enrolled in the course, unless otherwise specified by the course director; however, he/she will not receive an official grade for the course. Tuition will be applied for audits.

In special cases, course directors have the discretion to allow UAB students or faculty to attend, but not officially audit, portions of a course provided it does not lead to a diminished academic experience for those who are enrolled and provided that all other students and faculty interested in attending are given equal consideration.

Academic Status

Good Academic Standing - A student not on academic probation with a grade point average of at least 2.0 is in good academic standing at UAB School of Optometry.

Grade Appeal/Review

Students may appeal a grade in a course if they feel one of the following applies:

- The grading was not in accordance with published course grading policy.
- Inconsistencies were made in application of evaluation standards among students.
- An error occurred in determining or assigning the grade
- The grading was arbitrary or capricious.

- The grading was affected by illegal discrimination.

The student should seek resolution using the following steps:

1. Clarification should be sought from the course director/instructor in an attempt to resolve the disagreement without further appeal. This step must be completed as soon as possible but no later than 5 days from the date of notice from the course director or the release of the course grade in the BlazerNET/Banner system, whichever is earlier.
2. If the matter is not resolved by consultation with the course director, the student may submit a written appeal to the PPAHC. This must be accomplished as soon as possible, but no later than 5 days after meeting with the course director. The written appeal must state the basis for the grade appeal. The PPAHC will consult with the student and course director/instructor and review relevant evidence as needed. The PPAHC will decide for or against the appeal.
3. If the PPAHC's decision is to deny the appeal, the student may make a written appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The appeal is an opportunity to present either a challenge to the procedures followed or to offer newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome. This appeal must be received by the Associate Dean as soon as possible but no later than 5 days from the date of notice of the decision from the PPAHC. The Associate Dean will review the matter with the PPAHC Chair, the course director/instructor, and the student, in addition to any other relevant evidence, as necessary, and will decide whether to grant or deny the appeal. The appellant is reminded that an appeal to the Associate Dean is not intended to provide a forum in which to reiterate the same facts or arguments previously considered by the PPAHC.

If a grade appeal is not settled before the beginning of the next academic term, the student should register for the next term and attend all classes until otherwise notified by the Office of Student Affairs.

Academic Appeal

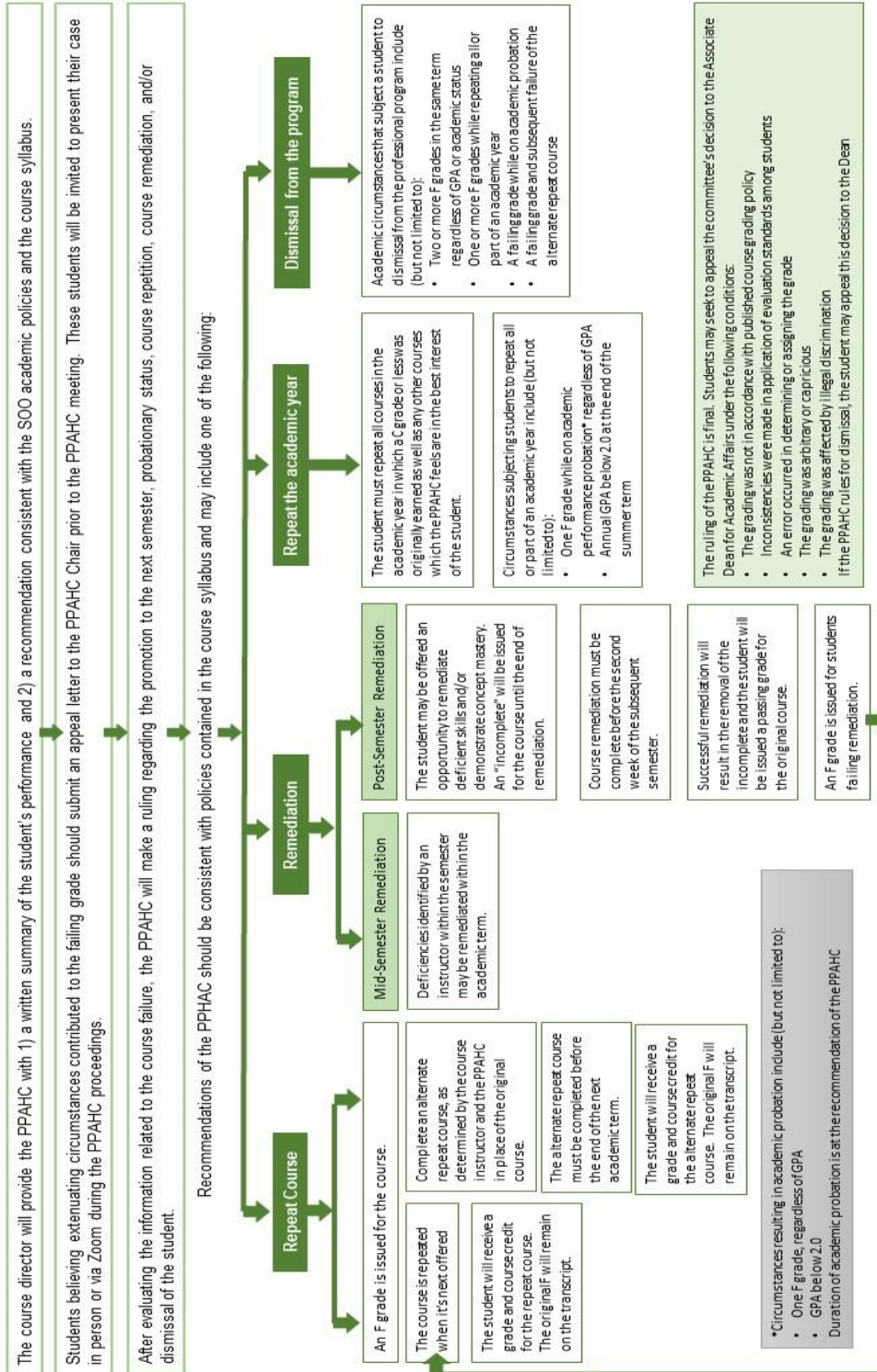
If a student believes there is reasonable cause to request an appeal of a decision by the PPAHC, regarding the status of probation or other required actions, such as remediation, repetition of a course or year, or dismissal from the program, the student must address a written appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, stating the basis for the appeal as soon as possible, but no later than 5 days from the date of the notification of the academic actions. The Associate Dean will review the matter with the PPAHC Chair, the course director/instructor and the student, in addition to any other relevant evidence, as necessary, and will decide whether or not to uphold the decision of the PPAHC. The objective of the Associate Dean in the case of an appeal will be to ensure that the applicable process was followed, and the decision reached is supported by the facts. The appellant is reminded that an appeal to the Associate Dean is not intended to provide a forum in which to reiterate the same facts or arguments previously considered by the PPAHC. The appeal is an opportunity to present either a challenge to the procedures followed or to offer newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome. The final appeal will be to the Dean of the School of Optometry.

If an academic status appeal is not settled before the beginning of the next academic term, the student should register for the next term and attend all classes until otherwise notified by the Office of Student Affairs.

These guidelines may be revised periodically. If a policy change has occurred during a term within which a grade was issued, or during a year in which an academic status was determined, the academic decisions will be governed by the version of the Academic Policy that is most favorable to the student.

Appendix - Professional Program Academic Policy Flow Chart

The following flowchart summarizes the potential outcomes for course failure:



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT EXAMINATIONS

- Students will be spaced appropriately for the scheduled room.
- Students are required to use a privacy screen when taking online exams.
- Students are to ensure that all books, backpacks, and other materials are on the floor and on occasion students may be asked to place these items at the back of the room against the wall.
- Cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during the exam and are prohibited from use during the exam. If a student is expecting an emergency call, he or she should inform the proctor prior to the exam, and the proctor may hold the cell phone in the front of the room.
- If the exam is not online, students will receive the appropriate number of exams. Any extra exams will be collected at the beginning of the exam.
- Announcements will be made concerning the remaining time left to complete the exam at appropriate intervals, such as 30 minutes, 15 minutes, and 5 minutes.
- At the end of the allotted time, the proctor will collect all examinations (if applicable).
- The proctor will report any suspected academic misconduct to the course director as soon as possible after the examination.

Secured Exams

by Adam Gordon, O.D.

The Student Affairs Office has observed increasing confusion and controversy over the definition of a secured exam. Because of misunderstandings between students and faculty, we feel it necessary to clarify the expectations for students and faculty regarding these exams.

- A secured exam is a testing instrument that is not released to the class.
- Since well-written and validated test questions are difficult to generate, instructors may wish to use a secure exam.
- The intent is that some or all of the test questions may be reused on a continuing basis.
- The instructor should clearly indicate if secured exams are used in the course syllabus and/or on the exam itself.
- As with all exams, the instructor has an obligation to allow students to review their performance on a secure exam.
- This review of the exam may be accomplished in class, individually, or both.

Students must understand that the content of a secure exam must not be acquired, copied or distributed without the instructor's expressed permission. Doing so is a direct violation of the UABSO Academic Integrity Code which governs the actions and responsibilities of students enrolled in the School of Optometry.

MANDATORY COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS

Course and Instructor Evaluations are mandatory and must be submitted by each student by the posted deadline. This is a requirement for all didactic and clinic courses. Students will receive notification via their official UABSO e-mail address (uab.edu) that the evaluations are available to be completed in Meditrek. Students will have access to course and instructor evaluations prior to the final exam for each course. Students will fill out one course evaluation for each course, and one instructor evaluation for each instructor teaching at least 10% of the course material.

ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE

If a student has access to evaluations for a class in which they were not registered, they should not complete or submit these evaluations. In this event, students should notify Student Affairs with the course name to record the error and remove their name from the list of students who did not submit all their evaluations. If a student does not have access to all their evaluations, they should notify Ms. Mintie Keiser at mkeiser@uab.edu.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Evaluations cannot be traced from the submitter. This computer program gives students total confidentiality. Because of this, an evaluation cannot be retracted after it is submitted. Ensure the instructor's name is verified on each form prior to submission.

MANDATORY

Why are course evaluations mandatory? The Curriculum Committee meticulously reviews every evaluation and uses student feedback to drive curricular changes that improve our program. Student evaluations and feedback are also a requirement of our accreditation.

COMMENT BOX ON EVALUATIONS

Each evaluation has a place for comments. Specific positive and negative comments are welcomed.

THE UAB SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

The essence of the academic Integrity Code and its Code of Ethics is that we will not engage in unethical behavior, nor will we tolerate it in others.

Approval Date: 09/12/23

This version of the policy supersedes all prior versions.

Definitions

- Academic Integrity Code – This document describes the Honor System and includes the Code of Ethics as well as the processes for handling alleged violations.
- Code of Ethics – The code contained within the Academic Integrity Code that delineates ethical behavior.
- Honor Pledge – A pledge affirming that the signee has read, understands and agrees to adhere to the Academic Integrity Code and its Code of Ethics.

Section I. Preamble

The UAB School of Optometry Academic Integrity Code is based on the principle that all members of the academic community maintain the highest ethical and professional standards. These principles apply to all student work, whether in-person or virtual, and work conducted in labs, internships/externships, or clinical assignments. Ethics and professional standards serve to maintain the integrity of the educational enterprise and of the profession and protect patients through ensuring conscientious patient care. The essence of the Academic Integrity Code is that we will not engage in unethical behavior, nor will we tolerate it in others.

Section II. Responsibilities of Students and Faculty

Articulating and maintaining high standards of ethical behavior is a task that is shared by students, faculty, and staff. The faculty and administration are responsible for the integrity of the educational program and shall support the Academic Integrity Code to foster the highest standards of professional behavior.

Each person signing the Honor Pledge is bound to abide by the Academic Integrity Code and to follow the policies and procedures outlined in this document. Students are expected to comply with the Academic Integrity Code in all academic and professional activities.

Students, faculty, residents, and staff are required to report breaches of the Code of Ethics when they are observed. Such responsibility is necessary to maintain the high standards of the School of Optometry. Examples of specific conduct, either expected or prohibited, are described below in the Code of Ethics but are not intended to limit the scope of what might be considered misconduct. The spirit of ethical behavior is the guiding principle. Failure to report misconduct is also a violation of the Code of Ethics.

Faculty members bear the responsibility for clearly expressing the rules governing assignments and examinations and for conducting examinations or other evaluative processes in a manner that discourages cheating. Faculty and designated exam proctors must be willing to participate in this process if this Code of Ethics is to be effective

Section III. Code of Ethics

While this Code of Ethics can in no way be exhaustive, it is intended as a guide to ethical behavior among students. The Academic Integrity Code requires students to act honorably while enrolled at the UAB School of Optometry and includes coursework that is offered in online, blended or web-enhanced environments or as a homework assignment. University students are expected to abide by the core values of honor and integrity set forth in UAB's creed, The Blazer Way which states "I hold myself accountable to represent our unique community with honor and integrity." All students are expected to be familiar with the Academic Integrity Code and abide by it. The Code of Ethics prohibits the following conduct, and any violation of the Code of Ethics is considered academic misconduct:

Conduct Related to Coursework

a. Cheating

Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, including but not limited to materials, information, study aids, the work of others, or electronic device-related information, any of which have not been approved by the instructor, as well as unauthorized assistance from third parties including a commercial service or engaging another person (whether paid or unpaid); sharing answers for either a take-home or in-class exams unless specifically and explicitly allowed.

b. Facilitation

Assisting, knowingly helping, supporting, conspiring, or colluding with others to engage in any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to two or more students that work together to produce individually submitted work without permission of the appropriate faculty member.

c. Plagiarism

Claiming as the student's own ideas, words, data, computer programs, creative compositions, artwork, etc., done by someone or something else. Examples include improper citation of referenced works, the use of commercially available scholarly papers, the use of artificial intelligence, failure to cite sources, or copying another person's ideas.

d. Self-Plagiarism

Students resubmitting their own previously submitted work without proper citation and permission from the current instructor to whom the original work was subsequently submitted.

e. Fabrication

Presenting as genuine any invented or falsified citation, data, or material.

f. Falsification/Misrepresentation

Falsifying, altering, or incorrectly defining the contents of documents or other materials related to academic matters, including work substantially done for one class as work done for another without receiving prior approval from the instructor, work pertaining to schedules, prerequisites, and transcripts, or misrepresenting facts about oneself for the purpose of obtaining an academic advantage or for the purpose of academically injuring another student.

Students are responsible for maintaining possession of their audience response system “clicker.” If students are registered as present for a class by the audience response system, or other attendance monitoring system, but are in fact not in class, or have left class without permission, this is a violation of the Code of Ethics. Students should therefore keep their audience response clicker secure; these devices should not be given to other students. Possession of devices registered to other students is considered a violation of the Code of Ethics.

Conduct Affecting Property

- a. Every student shall refrain from taking, damaging, or destroying property belonging to the university or to faculty, staff, students, or visitors.
- b. Students will respect the supplies provided by the School and will prevent needless and reckless waste of resources.
- c. Students will make reasonable efforts to keep equipment and property in proper working order; students should report equipment problems appropriately.

Conduct Affecting Patients

- a. Students will act in a way that puts the well-being of patients as the highest priority and will refrain from irresponsible, willful or negligent behavior in the delivery of patient care.
- b. In accordance with CDC guidelines, students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow health recommendations in order to keep the UAB community safe. This may include wearing face masks while in patient care settings or reporting symptoms or testing status. Student can visit the [UAB Employee Health website](#) for the most up to date information.
- c. It is also important stay current with Student Health guidelines for required immunizations and dashboard for vaccination status.
- d. Every student shall refrain from falsifying patient records and from willfully violating established clinic policy. Every student is expected to comply with all clinic policies and procedures, including applicable university, federal, and state laws and regulations at all times. Students involved in research projects are likewise expected to maintain scientific integrity and to comply with all university, federal, state, and school regulations, policies and laws.
- e. Students will respect the privacy of patients and will not discuss protected information unless it is medically appropriate. Students will be compliant with HIPAA regulations.
- f. Students will treat patients with respect, compassion, and understanding.
- g. Students will treat patients in a timely manner.
- h. Students will adhere to the clinical dress code and acceptable standards of personal care.
- i. Students will satisfy the requirements for infection control and protect the safety of patients in the clinic.
- j. Students will not use any substance that could impair their abilities while engaged in patient care.
- k. Students will not treat patients outside of School approved settings or without the supervision of faculty or an officially appointed, licensed practitioner. The practice of optometry is defined in [Title 34, Chapter 22](#) of the Code of Alabama. Students who see patients outside of School provisions may be guilty of a crime punishable by Alabama law.

Conduct Affecting the School or University

- a. Students will strive to uphold an atmosphere of academic purpose, including freedom of speech, the opportunity to explore ideas, and the chance to improve oneself through education.
- b. Students will be respectful to their classmates and faculty regarding attendance at lectures, timeliness, classroom demeanor, and being responsive to the requests of the lecturer.
- c. Students will participate in assigned activities and will attend all lectures and other assignments such as clinics and rotations as required by course syllabi. Students will adhere to all University policies and procedures. This includes appropriate use of the internet and Information Technology resources.

Section IV. The Professional Program Academic and Honor Council

The Professional Program Academic and Honor Council (PPAHC) is charged with monitoring the academic status of students enrolled in UABSO and enforcing UABSO's Academic Integrity Code. The PPAHC shall be composed of seven faculty members and two students. The Dean may appoint an ad hoc PPAHC faculty member or student to replace any representative who cannot serve for a given hearing. The PPAHC Chair acts as the Director of Academic Integrity. The Director of Student Affairs is appointed by the Dean as the Academic Integrity Coordinator and serves as a non-voting procedural advisor to the PPAHC Chair.

A quorum of the PPAHC will be 6 members, at least 3 of which must be faculty members including the Chair. If the alleged incident is clinical in nature, at least two of the faculty present must have clinical assignments.

The duties of the Chair include convening the PPAHC, presiding over hearings, and communicating with the administration of the School on behalf of the PPAHC.

All persons participating in PPAHC proceedings in any capacity shall refrain from discussing information pertaining to a case with anyone not directly involved with the case, unless necessary for the investigation or if instructed by the Chair of the PPAHC.

If members of the PPAHC are witnesses to an event, or have brought charges against a student, they may not serve on the Council for that case. Council members should recuse themselves from any case if they feel there may be any conflicts of interest or lack of impartiality. An accused student may also petition the Director of Student Affairs to have a PPAHC member dismissed from the proceedings if a perceived conflict of interest exists.

Section V. General Procedures for Suspected Violations

Reporting Suspected Violations

Any student, faculty, or staff member suspecting a Code of Ethics violation shall report it in writing to the faculty member in charge of the course (course director) in which the suspected violation occurred or directly to the Academic Integrity coordinator (Director of Student Affairs) or through the online reporting system ([Maxient](#)) within five working days of the discovery of the alleged incident. A course director having allegations of a Code of Ethics violation reported to them must report such allegations through Maxient within five working days of learning of the incident. In an extended absence of the Integrity coordinator, the suspected violation shall be reported to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or to the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs for violations related to clinical care, who must report the incident through the Maxient System.

Individual faculty may attempt to informally resolve an incident that occurs in or related to their course; however, every alleged violation of the Code of Ethics must be reported to the Academic Integrity Coordinator. Instructors are encouraged to discuss the suspected violation with the student(s) involved. Doing so may correct errors or misunderstandings. If an instructor determines during this preliminary discussion that no violation of the Code of Ethics occurred, the matter will then be closed, and no disciplinary record created. If the instructor determines a violation of the Code of Ethics may have occurred, the instructor will file a charge of academic misconduct via Maxient and provide all related evidence. Upon receipt of an online misconduct report, the Academic Integrity Coordinator will determine if there is “reasonable basis” to believe that academic misconduct has occurred. If not, the matter is closed, no disciplinary record is created, and the instructor is notified. If yes, the Academic Integrity Coordinator will set up a meeting with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the instructor, and student. The meeting can be held virtually if the parties are not available for an in-person meeting.

Resolution Agreement

With the authorization of the Academic Integrity Coordinator, instructors may enter into a Resolution Agreement with a student (a) who has no prior record of academic misconduct at the University and (b) who acknowledges responsibility for academic misconduct.

Instructors who wish to enter into a Resolution Agreement with the student shall send notice of the charge of violating the Academic Integrity Code and of a proposed meeting to the student’s official University email address. If the student fails to respond to the instructor’s email within five business days, or if the student fails to attend the meeting with the instructor, the instructor shall refer the case to the Academic Integrity Coordinator for disposition, noting the student’s failure to respond.

A Resolution Agreement with the instructor acknowledges the academic misconduct, documents how the pending case should be resolved and contains the following elements:

- Date of Resolution Agreement
- Student name and Blazer ID
- Course name and section (if applicable)
- School or college where academic misconduct occurred
- Instructor name and Blazer ID
- Date of academic misconduct
- Description of the academic misconduct
- Agreed resolution and sanctions
- Statement of waiving right of further review or appeal.

The Academic Integrity Coordinator will file the signed Resolution Agreement with the student’s record in Maxient. All cases resolved by a student’s authorized Resolution Agreement with a referring instructor shall be final and conclusive and not subject to further review.

Sanctions in cases resolved between instructors and students may range from a written reprimand to a failing grade on an assignment or the course depending on the severity of misconduct (Section VII). Resolution Agreements, however, are not an option when the sanction is suspension or expulsion. Acceptance of responsibility by an accused student may be considered by an instructor as a mitigating factor in the sanctioning process. The student must sign the document to accept the Resolution Agreement, or it will be forwarded to the Academic Integrity Coordinator for resolution.

If the student has a prior record of academic misconduct, does not accept a *Resolution Agreement* or fails to participate in a Resolution Agreement in the allotted timeframe, the resolution of academic misconduct must be achieved through referral to the Academic Integrity Coordinator. A hold will be placed on the student's account indicating that the student cannot withdraw from the course in which the academic misconduct is alleged to have occurred until the misconduct resolution process is complete.

Conferences

The Academic Integrity Coordinator may resolve the academic misconduct accusation in a conference with the student or refer any case to the PPAHC due to complexity, a contested case, or conflicts of interest. The Academic Integrity Coordinator must refer cases to the PPAHC if the student has been subject to a prior finding of academic misconduct or if the potential sanctions are suspension or expulsion. In any circumstance listed above, the student must be notified of charges, possible sanctions and provided a link to the Academic Integrity Code in a *Notice of Conference or Hearing* (Maxient). This notice should be provided to the student through the student's official University email address five days prior to a Conference or PPAHC hearing.

A conference is a meeting between the Coordinator and the accused student. It can be held virtually if the student or the Coordinator is not available for an in-person meeting. The Coordinator may invite the referring instructor to participate in the conference. Students, teaching assistants, and support staff who can offer information relevant to the case may be invited as participants in the conference. Findings and sanctions in a conference, if any, will be determined by the Coordinator. The standard of proof in conferences is **"preponderance of the evidence"**.

If the Coordinator determines:

- A student is not responsible for academic misconduct, the matter is closed, and no disciplinary record created.
- A student is responsible for academic misconduct, sanctions are determined in accordance with Section VIII of this Code.

If a suspected violation is not resolved through conference, the case is referred to the PPAHC for a hearing.

Investigative Team

If a suspected violation is referred to the PPAHC by the Coordinator, the PPAHC Chair will appoint an *ad hoc* Investigative Team consisting of one student and one faculty member. Neither member of the Investigative Team shall simultaneously be a member of the PPAHC. The investigative team will conduct interviews as required and review materials pertinent to the allegation. Such materials generally include a statement from the accuser, supporting evidence, and statements from witnesses and the accused. The investigative team, once convened, has **ten** working days to conduct its investigation. If more time is needed, the team may request an extension from the Chair of the PPAHC.

The written report of the investigative team shall include: **(1)** a statement of the allegation(s) against the accused student; **(2)** a description of the evidence and supporting documents (if available); and **(3)** the names of witnesses interviewed, including the accused, and a summary of their respective statements. The investigative team shall conduct its investigation impartially, in confidence, and shall be available to assist the PPAHC throughout any subsequent hearing. The written report shall be hand-delivered or e-mailed, in confidence, to the Chair of the PPAHC or his/her designee.

Charges by the PPAHC

Upon receipt of the investigative report, the PPAHC shall convene to formalize a statement of the charge or to issue a statement dismissing the allegation(s) if insufficient substantiating evidence exists. The PPAHC shall provide notice of the specific charge or of the dismissal of the alleged violation to the accused student through the Maxient reporting system (official UAB e-mail) or by certified mail and to the Director of Student Affairs. The statement of the charge shall include a brief summary of the alleged violation and the evidence presented in support of the charge in sufficient detail to allow the accused the opportunity to rebut the charge and to provide notification to the accused student of their right to a hearing.

The accused student must respond to the charge in writing within **five working days**, unless granted an extension by the Chair of the PPAHC. In this written response to the PPAHC, the accused student must either: **(1)** admit the charge and formally request their right to a hearing before the PPAHC; **(2)** admit the charge and waive their right to a hearing; **(3)** deny the charge and formally request their right to a hearing before the PPAHC or **(4)** deny the charge but waive their right to a hearing.

Once notice of the specific charge has been provided to the accused student and to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the PPAHC shall set a date for the hearing, any preliminary deadline(s) for the submission of supporting documents and the names of proposed witnesses, and a statement describing briefly the subject of each witness' testimony. Rescheduling the hearing at the request of the accused or the School is within the discretion of the PPAHC and shall not be unreasonably denied. The Council shall review documentary evidence in advance of the hearing.

Section VI. Hearings

The PPAHC must review cases of students with any prior findings of academic misconduct, all cases that may result in suspension or expulsion, or any case the Integrity Coordinator may refer due to complexity, a contested case, or conflicts of interest. The Coordinator shall be present as a non-voting procedural advisor to the chair of the hearing panel.

A hearing is intended to resolve the charge(s) and determine sanctions, if any. The Chair of the PPAHC will conduct the hearing. Both accused students and the University can present evidence, supporting witnesses, and other information pertinent to the matter under investigation. Accused students may be accompanied by one advisor of their choice at the hearing. The student must notify the PPAHC chair at least **two business days** in advance of their intent to be accompanied by an advisor and if the advisor is an attorney.

Procedures

Although the specific procedure may vary, the hearing process shall generally include the following: (1) call to order by the Chair; (2) introduction of those present; (3) statement of the charge and possible penalties if the charge is proven; (4) presentation of the evidence and testimony in support of the charge, and questioning of witnesses; (5) presentation of evidence and testimony in opposition to the charge (rebuttal), and questioning of witnesses; (6) closing statement(s). All questioning of witnesses shall be by the PPAHC Chair unless the Council decides otherwise. The accused may question witnesses through written questions submitted to the Chair of the PPAHC who may edit or screen them for appropriateness.

Questions of relevance, the role and availability of witnesses, the use of written statements, and the timely conduct of proceedings will be determined by the PPAHC Chair. The accused student shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard, to question witnesses through questions submitted to the PPAHC Chair, to rebut adverse evidence, and to make a brief closing statement. Members of the PPAHC may ask any

questions at any time during the hearing and may elect to disallow or curtail testimony that is deemed to be unnecessarily redundant or not relevant to the issue(s) being heard. Except for the accused and, if invited by the accused, an advisor, all other witnesses shall be excluded from the hearing room, except when testifying. No more than one witness shall be called to testify at a time. The School or the PPAHC may request that UAB security be present at a hearing or conference. Throughout the hearing, all persons present shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner. The Chair shall be responsible for maintaining order during the hearing.

As soon as possible following the conclusion of the hearing, the PPAHC shall meet in private session to consider all the evidence presented and shall decide on one of two outcomes. The possible outcomes are that the charge is either (1) proven by a preponderance of the evidence or (2) not proven by a preponderance of the evidence. A majority vote of a quorum of the members of the PPAHC shall be required for either outcome. The Chair of the PPAHC will generally not vote, unless the vote of the other Council members results in a tie. Following the vote, the Chair shall record the results and provide a brief narrative statement explaining the rationale for the Council's finding(s).

After notice of charges is sent through Maxient, if a student fails to attend a scheduled hearing, the PPAHC Chair will document that the student did not accept responsibility for the charge(s). All relevant evidence will then be considered by the PPAHC to resolve the case without the student. The student(s) will be notified of the case outcome and any determination of sanctions.

Cases Involving Multiple Students

Cases involving multiple students will normally be heard together if more than one student is alleged to have jointly engaged in one or more acts of academic misconduct. These cases will only be combined with the written consent of the students. At the discretion of the Council, more than one accused student may be present when witnesses are called to testify if multiple accused are involved with a single incident. Students who seek a separate hearing must provide a written justification for their request to the PPAHC Chair at least **five business days** before the scheduled proceeding. If related cases are not heard jointly, the PPAHC Chair may consider all relevant statements, materials and other evidence presented at an earlier proceeding or subsequent proceeding related to the same case.

Outcome

If the PPAHC determines:

- A student is not responsible for academic misconduct, the matter is closed, and no disciplinary record created.
- A student is responsible for academic misconduct, sanctions are determined in accordance with Section VIII of this Code.

After a hearing, the accused student(s) will be provided with a letter containing a statement of the findings and any sanctions imposed within five (5) business days through the Maxient reporting system.

Section VII. Sanctions for Violations of the Academic Integrity Code

Level One

Generally, violations resolved at this level are those that are less severe and with correspondingly less severe penalties. Examples of possible level one sanctions are included below:

1. Requirement to write and deliver an apology letter.

2. Requirement to attend an Academic Integrity workshop.
3. Requirement to attend educational or counseling programs.
4. Requirement to complete a variety of behavioral modification programs including formal courses and/or informal assignments, such as an anger management course, etc.
5. Reprimand - The student will be reprimanded in writing by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, with a copy for the student's file, of the nature of the Code of Ethics violation and warned that repetition of the wrongful conduct may cause more severe action.
6. Reduced grade on an assignment or course.
7. Failing grade – A failing grade may be given for the course, assignment, exam or evaluative process. A notation on the student's permanent academic record may also be made to indicate that a reduced or failing grade was assigned because of a Code of Ethics violation, on the judgment of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The student may enroll to repeat a course in which an "F" has been earned, but the original course grade remains on the student's academic record. The Grade Forgiveness Policy prohibits replacement of an "F" resulting from academic misconduct.
8. Opportunity to revise/repeat – specific to the assignment in which the academic misconduct occurred.
9. Restitution – Restitution for lost, damaged, or destroyed property may be required.
10. Additional course work - Papers, additional work, counseling, etc. may be required.

Level Two

These violations are considered more severe with concomitantly more severe penalties. In the interest of protecting patients, serious clinical infractions will be dealt with in an immediate and definitive manner. The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs may immediately suspend all clinic privileges in suspected cases until the matter is resolved. Favorable letters of recommendation will not knowingly be furnished while sanctions are in effect. No student may graduate from the UAB School of Optometry or participate in the Externship Program until pending allegations of a Code of Ethics violation have been resolved and any recommended sanctions fulfilled. Examples of possible level two sanctions are included below:

1. Removal from official School positions – Students may be removed from official School positions, such as class president, or may not have the privilege to represent the School in an official capacity.
2. Academic Conduct Probation – students determined to be guilty of an academic misconduct offense and not in good academic standing for a specified period of time.
3. Probation with restrictions - A student on probation may also have certain privileges removed, such as clinic privileges in a specialty clinic, or the privilege of attending a specific class or attendance at a professional meeting. Probation with restrictions typically extends the enrollment period required to satisfy School, graduation and accreditation requirements.
4. Academic Suspension – The student will be excluded from classes and other privileges of the School and University for a specified period of time. May or may not include suspension from non-academic student activities (see conduct suspension in the Student Conduct Code which supersedes academic suspension).
5. Academic Expulsion – The student will be permanently expelled from the School of Optometry and the University (see Student Conduct Code). Official written notice will be provided to the student with a copy for the student's file. No student expelled from the School because of a Code of Ethics violation shall be eligible for readmission.
6. Suspension of clinic privileges – Privileges may be suspended in whole or in part which may result in extended enrollment at the School.
7. Enrollment extension - A student may be required to extend their education at the School past the traditional four-year curriculum. This allows the faculty additional time to help the student develop personal ethical and professional standards. Extensions may be for a period of months or years.

A second violation of the Code of Ethics, as determined by a PPAHC hearing, shall result in expulsion from the School of Optometry. Suspensions or expulsions for academic misconduct apply throughout the University and are not limited to the school or college where an incident may have occurred or where the student is enrolled. Suspensions and expulsions are recorded on the student transcript. A student suspended from a UAB school or college for academic misconduct will have a hold placed and will not be permitted to enroll in another UAB school without that school's permission.

Admission of guilt does not remove the student's right to a formal hearing or conference if sanctions recommended in the resolution agreement are not acceptable to the student or if they include suspension or expulsion.

Criminal or Civil Penalties

Actions may occur which carry additional civil and criminal penalties in addition to the ones outlined in this document. Such actions may be violations of other University policies or local and federal laws. The commencement of civil or criminal action shall not prevent the School from pursuing actions as outlined in this document.

Section VIII. Appeals

All cases resolved by a Conference with the Coordinator shall be final and conclusive and not subject to further review. Findings from the PPAHC of academic misconduct may be appealed to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs within **five business days** upon receipt of the notification of the findings. The appeal review will be limited to consideration of findings of fact, recommended sanctions, or any written response from the accused student citing prejudice or procedural error. The Associate Dean may uphold the panel's findings and sanctions or may return to the PPAHC for reconsideration if determined that a significant procedural error or prejudice against the charged student by any panel member may have influenced the outcome.

The Associate Dean will provide a statement supporting or denying the appeal request to the Coordinator. If the Associate Dean elects to vacate the decision of the PPAHC, the Associate Dean shall provide a concise written statement to the accused and the PPAHC explaining the basis for such action. If the Associate Dean affirms the decision of the PPAHC, or affirms the decision with a reduced penalty, the decision shall be transmitted to the Dean, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the PPAHC and notice to the appellant shall be provided by certified mail, hand delivery or official UAB e-mail. The student can make a final appeal of the decision to the Dean of the School of Optometry. The decision of the Dean will be communicated to the student as described above and will be final.

- After conferences or hearings, a brief written statement of the findings and sanctions imposed will be documented in a *Notice of Outcome* (Maxient). After an appeal to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs or Dean of the School, the appeal decision will be documented in a *Response to Appeal* (Maxient).
- The PPAHC chair will provide the *Notice of Outcome* or *Notice of Appeal* to:
 - student's official University email address within five business days.
 - the student's home school or college (including the Honors College and the Graduate School).
 - the Dean and/or appropriate Department Chair of the student's home school or college
 - the instructor of the course

Section IX. Residents, Graduate and Post-Doctoral Students

Policies involving post-doctoral students are more complex due to the variety of positions and appointments which exist within the UAB School of Optometry. The in-house residents are employees of UAB and are covered under [UAB employee guidelines](#). Students who register for a Graduate degree are enrolled in the Graduate School, and Graduate School policies will apply to them. The Graduate School shall be notified of any suspected violations of this Academic Integrity Code to allow response through its internal processes that may lead up to expulsion. For dual degree graduate students whose academic misconduct occurs in one of their two schools, the procedures of the school in which the infraction occurred should be used. If neither situation exists, then students are covered by this Academic Integrity Code and Code of Ethics, but an *ad hoc* Hearing Committee will be appointed by the Dean, consisting of two post-doctoral peers and two post-doctoral faculty members. When such allegations occur, the Dean will inform students which policy applies to them based on their specific status.

Section X. Documentation and Activity Report

Records documenting investigations and/or disciplinary actions taken against students charged with academic misconduct shall be entered into the Maxient system and will also be maintained in the Office of Student Affairs for a period of 5 years or until the student leaves the University, whichever is longer. These files are considered confidential and are not publicly accessible.

The Chair of the PPAHC will keep a written record of its activity each academic year. The activity report will include the number of allegations reported, allegations dismissed, cases plead guilty, and hearings conducted.

The Director of Student Affairs shall keep a record of all alleged violations of the Code of Ethics and a summary of the disposition of the charge.

During the school year, the Chair of the PPAHC will provide an annual report to faculty and students detailing the Code of Ethics actions of the previous year. The report will include the number and nature of alleged violations, the number of violations referred to the PPAHC for hearing, and a statement of the range of penalties imposed, without reference to personally identifiable information. This reporting function is to support an institutional culture that promotes the use of the Academic Integrity Code.

Section XI. Implementation

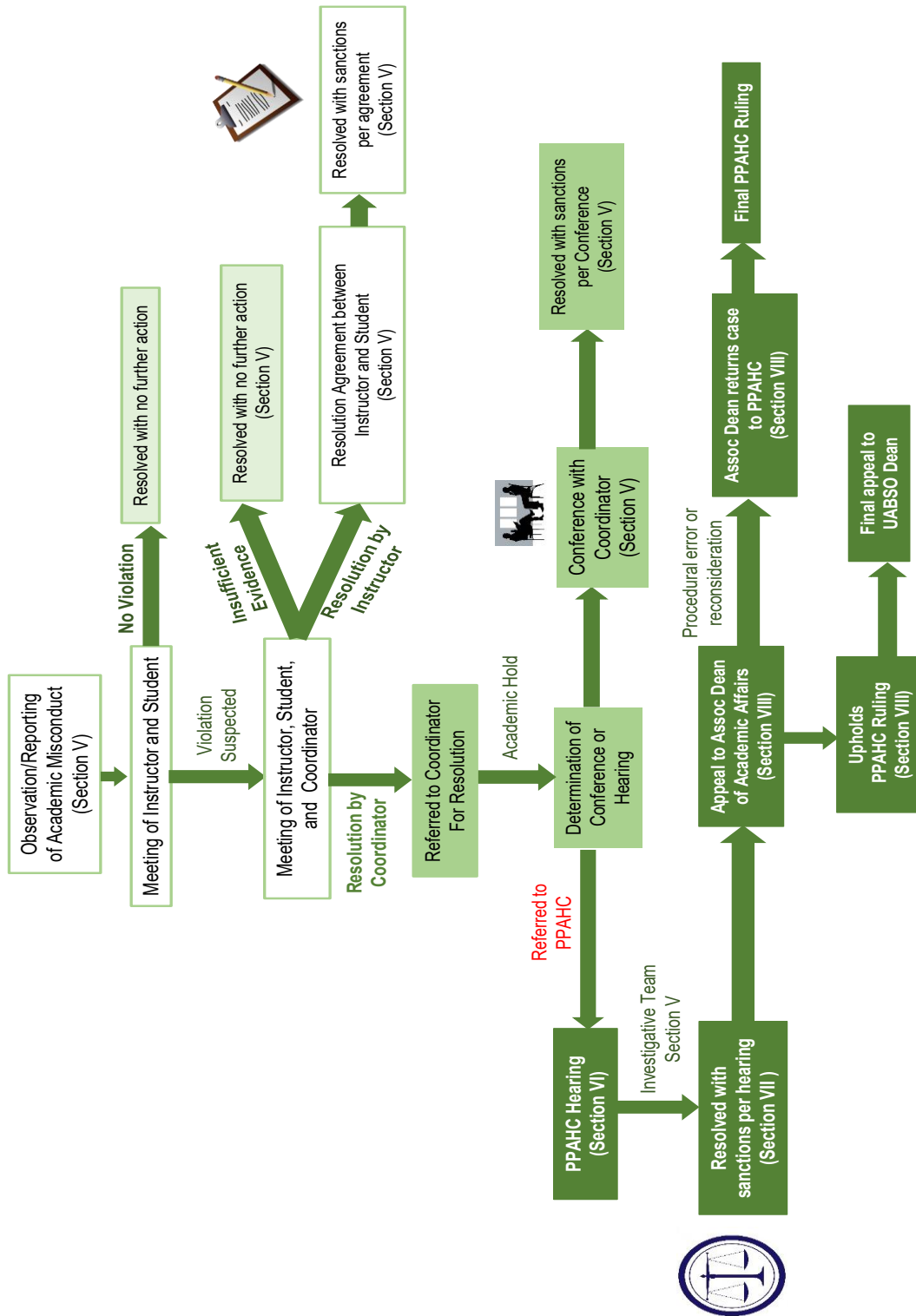
The Academic Integrity Code shall be presented to each entering class during orientation. Revisions to the Academic Integrity Code may occur frequently. The official version is available from the Office of Student Affairs and is maintained on the School web site. Infractions that occur will be governed by the official version of the Code of Ethics that is in effect at the time the infraction is reported. Each student will be responsible for reading the current Academic Integrity Code document and signing the Honor Pledge. Each student will be given an opportunity to ask questions before signing the Honor Pledge. The signed pledge becomes part of the student's permanent file.

Section XII. Other Resources

Students, including post-graduate and professional, are referred to official University documents (<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=101>) for additional information on topics of process and ethics.

Appendix - Academic Misconduct Flow Chart

Academic Misconduct Flow Chart



HONOR PLEDGE FORM

The [Honor Pledge Form](#).

CLASS ATTENDANCE

During undergraduate education it may have been permissible for students to miss class without any adverse effect on grades or learning. However, the curriculum for the professional program is more demanding and requires more time management and class/lab participation. Regardless of whether the instructor includes class attendance as part of the course syllabus, school policy requires that students attend class. If for any reason students have an emergency (illness, family crisis, etc.) that necessitates being out of school, they should notify instructors by e-mail of the courses that will be missed and copy the Office of Student Affairs. It is particularly important that the appropriate faculty or staff be notified prior to scheduled examinations.

POLICY ON STUDENT ABSENCES

It is anticipated that students enrolled in the School of Optometry will attend all lectures and laboratories. Course instructors are responsible for monitoring classroom attendance.

Non-clinic Absences

Authorized Absences

Absences Due To Personal Emergencies:

In this category are absences due to illness, accident, death, legal or financial crisis.

Absences Due To Approved Student Projects, Professional Meetings And Other Special Academic Activities:

In this category are absences to attend annual meetings of optometric professional organizations such as the AOA, AAO, ARVO, AOSA, and SECO. Some meetings will involve cancellation of all classes and others not. The academic schedule should be consulted for each meeting. When not specifically canceled, absences will require make-up.

Procedures

Absences Due To Personal Emergencies:

Such absences will be considered on an individual basis, but generally not approved for personal business. Unexplained, unauthorized or excessive absences may result in disciplinary action. Notification to appropriate faculty by e-mail and specify (1) reason for absence, (2) estimated length of absence, (3) assigned clinic responsibilities, and (4) phone # during period of absence.

Absences For Student Projects, Etc.:

Permission must be obtained from instructors whose class will be missed by completing a Student Absence Request Form. Lecture and lab courses must have at least two weeks' advanced notice.

Student Absence Request Form For Didactic Courses Can Be Found At:

<http://www.uab.edu/optometry/home/student-resources>

Clinic Absences

The clinic absence policy is different from the didactic course absence policy and is located in Section 7 of the UAB Eye Care Clinic Manual located in UAB Eye Care Canvas.

UABSO LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

On rare occasions, a student may request a temporary leave of absence from the professional program. A leave of absence may be granted for personal or medical reasons. A personal leave may be granted if a student in good academic standing encounters circumstances that significantly hamper academic or clinical progress. The student's academic standing refers to both recent performance (i.e. whether on academic probation) and performance in the current academic term. A medical leave may be granted if a student has a significant health issue (such as serious illness, hospitalization, surgery/recuperation, pregnancy, maternity leave, etc.) that requires extended time for healing, treatment, or recovery. For a personal leave of absence, the minimum duration is one academic term. The maximum duration of a personal or medical leave of absence is one year. If a student requires more than one year away from the professional program, this will be considered a withdrawal.

The intent of a leave of absence is to provide the student with a temporary departure from the program, while maintaining his or her status and position within the curriculum. The student considering a leave of absence should discuss his or her situation with the Director of Student Affairs prior to making a formal request.

Procedure for Requesting a Leave of Absence

To request a leave of absence, the student must submit the following to the Director of Student Affairs:

- A written request detailing the circumstances involved and the duration of the anticipated leave.
- In the case of medical leave, a letter from the student's physician supporting the need for and duration of the leave. At the end of the leave period, another physician letter will be required confirming that the student is able to return to the professional program.
- If the duration of the requested leave is less than one year, a written proposal of how the student intends to make up the missed classes, laboratories, and/or clinic assignments. This proposal will be reviewed by appropriate administration and may be modified to comply with the policies and requirements of the professional program (see below). The Associate Dean for Student Affairs must approve the final plan.

Academic Progression and Leave of Absence

A leave of absence is a temporary suspension of all academic and clinical activities in the optometry professional program. As such, a leave of absence may jeopardize forward progress in the professional curriculum and delay expected graduation. It is the policy of the UAB School of Optometry that progression in the professional program may not be possible if significant absence is incurred due to leave, according to the following conditions:

- If a leave of absence precludes attendance in didactic (classroom) courses for less than or equal to 25% in any given term, continuation in these courses will occur only with the approval of the Director of Student Affairs, after consultation with the course instructors involved. If allowed to continue, the student will be responsible for making up all assignments and activities missed during the leave.

- If a leave of absence precludes attendance in didactic (classroom) courses for more than 25% of any given term, continuation in those courses will not occur, and the student will receive a “W” (withdraw) grade for the involved courses. The student will be permitted to re-enter the courses in good standing at the next available offering of the course.
- If a leave of absence precludes any attendance in clinical courses, the student will be permitted to make up equivalent clinical experiences only with approval of the appropriate Clinic Service Directors, with final approval by the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs. The student should meet with each Clinic Service Director to develop a written plan that satisfies the requirements of the particular clinic. If an approved plan is not possible, the student will re-enter the clinical courses at the beginning of the next available offering of the courses.

REFUND POLICY

Tuition for the term will be refunded if withdrawal occurs prior to the second week of a term. Fifty percent of tuition will be refunded if withdrawal occurs between week two and week four of the term. No refund of tuition will be made for withdrawals after the fourth week of a term.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

UABSO is committed to reviewing and responding to student complaints appropriately. A complaint is an expression of discontent based on the result of behavior or circumstances that the student believes are unjust, unsafe, inequitable, or create an unnecessary hardship. Students who attempt to resolve issues directly with the appropriate parties and are not satisfied may file formal written complaints.

Complaint Procedure

Informal Complaint Procedure: Student complaints should be resolved on an informal basis without the filing of a formal grievance.

1. A student has 10 business days from the date of the incident being grieved to resolve their complaint informally by approaching their instructor, department chair or any other staff or faculty member directly involved in the grieved incident.
2. When this process does not result in a resolution of the grievance, the student may proceed to the formal grievance procedure.

Note: The complaint will not be processed if the 10-day period has passed.

Formal Complaint Procedure: When a student cannot resolve their complaint informally, they may use the formal grievance procedure.

1. Within 15 business days of the incident being grieved, the student must file a formal grievance in the Office of Student Affairs using the Student Grievance Form accompanied by supporting documentation.
2. If the grievance is against the Director of Student Affairs or an individual faculty member, the student shall file the grievance in the Office of the Department of Optometry and Vision Science Chairman.
3. The Director of Student Affairs or the Department Chairman, will investigate the matter and supply a written response to the student within 15 business days.

4. If the grieved incident involves possible unlawful harassment, discrimination or retaliation for reporting unlawful harassment/discrimination, the investigation will be handled by the University Office of Student Affairs as directed by the University policy.
5. If the grieved incident is closely related to an incident being processed through the disciplinary procedure, the disciplinary procedure will take precedence, and the grievance will not be processed until the disciplinary procedure has run its course.

Appeal of Staff Response Procedure

If a student is unsatisfied with the response from the Director of Student Affairs and/or the Chairman of the Department of Optometry and Vision Science, the student may appeal the decision to the Dean.

1. A student must file a written appeal within 5 business days of receiving the response from the Director of Student Affairs and/or the Chairman of the Department of Optometry and Vision Science.
2. The appeal will be decided based entirely on documents provided by the student and the administration; therefore, the student must ensure that he has provided all relevant documents with his appeal.
3. At the Dean's sole discretion, grievance appeals may be held in one of the following two ways:
 - A. The Dean may review the information provided by the student and administration and make the final decision; or
 - B. The Dean may appoint a cross-functional committee to make the final decision.
4. Whichever process is chosen by the Dean, the decision of the grievance appeal is final. Retaliation against a student for filing a grievance is strictly prohibited.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex — including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions — in education and in programs and activities that receive federal funding. Title IX specifically prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions. More information may be found at [Support for Students | Title IX](#).

DRESS POLICY

All faculty, staff, residents and interns are in direct contact with patients, families, physicians, prospective students and the public at large. In such a professional environment, each individual must dress according to the school's established guidelines. The following dress policy applies at all times when working in the Henry Peters Building public areas.

- Good grooming is expected of **all personnel** in every detail. The following are prerequisites to good grooming:
 - Good personal hygiene, regular bathing, and good oral hygiene
 - A clean outfit daily
 - Hair neat, clean and professional
 - Mustaches, beards, goatees and sideburns are acceptable only if they are clean and neatly trimmed. Partially shaven facial hair is not acceptable in a patient care setting
 - Cologne, perfume, after-shave and make-up should be used in moderation

General policy for all faculty/staff/residents/interns:

- Materials for scrubs should be of such quality that undergarments are not visible
- Adequate undergarments should always be worn

- Any jewelry or adornment should be minimal and in good taste and should not interfere with or distract from direct patient care or other workplace duties

Employee identification badge or student identification badge provided by the University is required to be worn at all times when on the clinic floor. This enables students to be readily identified. This regulation applies to faculty, staff and interns whether working or visiting in the clinic.

For more information regarding clinic attire, refer to Section 2 of the UAB Eye Care Clinic Manual in UAB Eye Care Canvas.

REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR USE OF STATE VEHICLES

To comply with the requirements set down by UAB's Office of Risk Management, UABSO must keep a file of information for eligibility to operate UAB cars and vans. This includes a photocopy of a student's current Driver's License, a statement of their agreement to abide by UAB guidelines, and of their willingness to allow UABSO Clinic Administration to obtain a motor vehicle report on the student's driving record. The appropriate form must be completed by anyone who will be driving one of our vehicles before actually operating it. More information can be found in Section 2 of the UAB Eye Care Clinic Manual in UAB Eye Care Canvas.

POLICY ON ELECTIVES and COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS

Electives are non-mandatory 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 the 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 several electives.

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.

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. After 25% of a term, no withdrawal is permitted. Courses in the graduate program will provide grades according to the rules of the graduate school. Elective courses being substituted for clinic courses will use the customary clinic grading scale.

Substituting Electives for Professional Course Work

On rare occasions with prior permission from the Chair of the Department of Optometry and Vision Science and the 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 Department Chair and the Dean must be completed.

Externship Options for Graduate Students enrolled in the OD/MS Program

All OD/MS graduate students have the option to use one of their Fourth Year Professional Program Externships to conduct MS level thesis research. This information will be provided to the student by the Director of the Graduate Program at the time of the student's enrollment in the OD/MS program. If a student elects to use an externship to conduct MS level thesis research, the student must obtain approval from the Director of the Graduate Program. Upon approval, the Director of the Graduate Program will notify the Associate Dean of Student Affairs of the student's externship choice.

EXTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

During the last year at UAB, students spend a portion of their year in an externship setting outside UABSO. The mission of the UAB School of Optometry's Externship Program is to support the mission of the School by complementing and enhancing the educational and clinical training provided on campus. Through diverse, high-quality, and ethically grounded externship experiences, the program advances students' clinical education, fosters professional excellence, and prepares future optometrists to serve their communities with integrity, compassion, and collaboration. During their externship rotations, students gain increased experience in optometric patient care and the diagnosis, treatment and management of ocular disease under the guidance of a practicing professional. Also, depending on the site, experience may be gained in specialty areas of optometry (such as contact lenses, low vision, pediatric and binocular vision), and in the co-management of patients. In addition to required university-based experiences, students select other externship sites in institutional, hospital-based or multidisciplinary clinics and private practice locations.

Program Goals

Clinical Competence and Excellence

- Provide students with hands-on experiences that reinforce core competencies in optometric care.
- Strengthen diagnostic, therapeutic, and patient management skills through exposure to a wide range of clinical conditions and care settings.
- Promote evidence-based clinical decision-making and critical thinking.
- Provide an environment which challenges, and allows for the improvement of, clinical efficiency of the optometry student.

Ethical and Compassionate Care

- Instill a strong sense of professional responsibility, integrity, and ethical behavior in all aspects of patient care.
- Encourage respect for diverse patient populations and the delivery of compassionate, patient-centered care.
- Reinforce the importance of the doctor-patient relationship and effective communication.

Interprofessional Collaboration and Community Engagement

- Prepare students to work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals to improve patient outcomes.
- Encourage participation in community-based care and public health initiatives that enhance quality of life and vision health.
- Highlight the role of optometry in the broader healthcare system.

Practice Management and Professional Development

- Introduce students to the business and operational aspects of optometric practice, including quality improvement and regulatory compliance.
- Provide opportunities to explore various practice models and co-management strategies.
- Support the development of leadership skills and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Program Quality and Continuous Improvement

- Evaluate externship sites regularly for educational value, ethical standards, and student support.

- Monitor student performance and provide feedback to support growth and accountability.
- Maintain documentation and assessment practices that demonstrate program effectiveness and alignment with institutional goals.

Optometric Extern Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate clinical proficiency by applying foundational biomedical, behavioral, and clinical knowledge to diagnose and manage a wide range of visual and ocular conditions using appropriate optometric techniques and instruments.
2. Integrate clinical observation and practice by emulating the decision-making, patient care strategies, and professional behaviors modeled by attending optometrists.
3. Enhance diagnostic and therapeutic skills through the effective use of common procedures in the problem-solving stages of patient care.
4. Communicate with compassion and clarity by fostering trust and collaboration with patients, families, and healthcare professionals.
5. Understand the broader context of health by recognizing how ocular and systemic conditions interact and appreciating the optometrist's role in interdisciplinary and community-based care.
6. Engage in ethical, patient-centered care by demonstrating professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to patient education and the doctor-patient relationship.

The externship year is divided into three terms beginning the summer of the 3rd year. The Summer term is 12 weeks, and the Fall and Spring terms are 16 weeks and 17 weeks, respectively. Terms may be further divided into Summer 1, Summer 2, Fall 1, Fall 2, Spring 1, and Spring 2. Students have certain externship site requirements and have some latitude in selecting their other sites. Each student must spend at minimum 14 weeks at the UABSO clinic. To ensure that all students receive a complete clinical experience, it is required that one of the rotations (minimum of 8 weeks) be hospital-based, institutional or in a multidisciplinary-type environment. A second rotation (minimum of 6 weeks) must be spent in a private practice environment (optometry, ophthalmology), which allows students to gain administrative experience along with patient care.

There are currently five Hospital-based sites that must be staffed by UABSO externs every term and one summer term only. These sites are the Birmingham Veteran's Administration Medical Center, which requires four externs per term and the Tuscaloosa Veteran's Administration Medical Center, which requires three externs per term. The Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (Montgomery/Tuskegee, AL), Ralph H. Johnson Veteran's Administration Medical Center (Charleston, SC), and Biloxi Veteran's Administration Medical Center all require one extern per term, and the Tallahassee Veteran's Affairs Health Care Center requires one student during the summer term only. One additional student per site will be designated as alternates for these sites each term but will staff the sites only if an assigned extern is unable or ineligible to participate.

All other sites are optional, but they must fulfill the site requirements outlined above. The students select sites taken from a roster of approved sites. These sites are in every southeastern state as well as other states across the nation and include multidisciplinary health centers, co-management referral centers, military hospitals, Indian Health Service facilities, and solo, partnership and group optometry and ophthalmology practices. Optional sites are assigned to students after the required sites, and alternates are determined. Externship assignments are based on preceptor availability, GPA, and student preference.

Dr. Candice Turner, Director of the Externship Program
Ms. Cynthia Perry, Program Coordinator

* This is subject to change during the academic year.

PARTICIPATION IN THE UABSO DOCTORAL CONVOCATION AND HOODING CEREMONY

Upon successful completion of the required courses and fulfillment of all other obligations to the University, a student will officially graduate from the School of Optometry

In addition to the official UAB graduation, the School of Optometry conducts a Doctoral Convocation and Hooding Ceremony, which is a more meaningful celebration of the completion of the professional program. This event is only for optometry graduates with their family and friends in attendance. The graduates are presented with their academic hoods and diplomas.

If a fourth-year student encounters circumstances that delay their official graduation, the student may still participate in the Doctoral Convocation and Hooding Ceremony if the following conditions are met:

1. All didactic (classroom) courses are completed and passed
2. All other University requirements and obligations have been completed.

UABSO RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

The UAB School of Optometry offers advanced clinical education in specialty areas of optometry through three in-house and five affiliated residency programs. Currently, eight residency programs offer a total of 16 positions.

The UAB School of Optometry places significant emphasis on residency education. It strives to develop, maintain, advance, and promote post-doctoral clinical training programs of excellence in the major areas of optometric care.

Requirements

Doctor of Optometry degree from an ACOE-accredited professional optometric program

Passing score on parts I, II and III of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry examinations

How to Apply

All residency programs utilize the [ORMatch Residency Matching Service](#) for application.

For more information contact:

Caroline Beesley Pate, OD, FAAO

Director of Residency Program

Cbeesley@uab.edu

<https://www.uab.edu/optometry/home/academics/residency-programs>

EMPLOYMENT AND PRACTICE LISTINGS NETWORK

The [UABSO Employment and Practice Listings Network](#) is a service designed to support current students, alumni, and prospective employers. The network provides a centralized platform where UAB students and graduates can explore posted employment and practice opportunities to assist them in securing professional positions.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONS

At the UAB School of Optometry, each class elects a team of officers at the start of fall semester to serve as advocates and leaders for their peers. These officers play a vital role in fostering communication between students, faculty, and administration, ensuring that academic experience is both collaborative and supportive.

The Class President serves as the primary liaison, maintaining open lines of communication and addressing concerns promptly. The Vice President provides essential support and steps in if the president is not available. The Secretary ensures that schedules and events are well-organized and communicated, while the Treasurer manages class funds responsibly to support activities and initiatives. Specialized roles such as the Equipment Chair and IT Chair provide critical logistical and technological support, while the Honor Chair participates in meetings with the Professional Program Academic and Honor Council when needed. Additional positions, including Social Chairs, Intramural Chair, First-Year Representatives, and Homecoming Chair, enrich student life through events and activities that strengthen community bonds.

Class Officer Roles and Descriptions

President: Serves as the primary liaison among students, faculty, and administration; coordinates class communications and resolves scheduling conflicts.

Vice President: Supports the President and assumes duties in their absence; assists with scheduling and interprofessional activities.

Secretary: Maintains class schedules, organizes events, and ensures timely communication.

Treasurer: Manages class funds and budgeting with transparency.

Equipment Chair: Coordinates equipment purchases, and vendor showcases; serves as contact for equipment-related concerns.

IT Chair: Manages shared digital resources and technology platforms.

Intramural Chair: Organizes recreational and intramural activities for student wellness.

Social Chairs (2–3 positions): Plans social events and fosters community engagement.

First-Year Representatives (2–3 positions): Supports incoming students as they transition into the program.

Homecoming Chair: Assists with Homecoming activities and class participation.

Election Process: Elections are conducted electronically by the SGA President early in the fall semester. Candidates may campaign and submit statements of interest. Results are announced via email.

Student Organizations

Student organizations planning international travel must email the UAB Associate Director of Education Abroad (educationabroad@uab.edu) and the UABSO Student Success Manager for guidance and approval.

AAO - American Academy of Optometry UABSO Student Chapter

The American Academy of Optometry UABSO Student Chapter began in July 2010. Membership in the organization is open to any student from 1st through 4th year. The focus of the chapter is to educate its members on topics related to the Academy and to make the transition from graduate to Fellow of the Academy easier.

AOSA - American Optometric Student Association

This organization serves as the UABSO student branch of the American Optometric Association. Students are automatically members when they enroll at the UABSO. The membership fee is paid by the School so that there is no out-of-pocket expense for the student. Major student activities include the Student Bowl, Optometry

Meeting, fall mixers, and general body meetings. In addition, AOSA members also work with the Alabama Optometric Association attending board meetings and volunteering to help as needed.

BSK - Beta Sigma Kappa International Optometric Honor Society

The purposes of the Society are to stimulate scientific attainment, academic excellence, and ethical practice of optometry. A student must maintain a GPA of 3.5 at the conclusion of each school year. Members of BSK are eligible to work in the tutor lab. Members of BSK are recognized during the Doctoral Convocation and Hooding Ceremony by wearing honor cords.

Gold Key International Optometric Society

The purpose of the Gold Key is to recognize upper-class students who have demonstrated outstanding professional and ethical attitudes through leadership in their class, college, and profession. All second, third- and fourth-year students are potential candidates for membership. However, no more than 8 students per class can join. Applications are sent to everyone in the 2nd and 3rd year classes in January or February. New members are selected by the current members. Although it is not GPA - based, the student must be in good academic standing. Not all 8 spots need to be used if the members do not feel as if there are enough qualified applicants. If all 8 spots are not filled, the remaining spots will be offered the next year.

SVOSH - Student Volunteers in Optometric Service to Humanity

SVOSH is a charitable organization dedicated to providing vision care to people in the United States and abroad who would not otherwise receive care. Activities include collecting used eyeglasses and participating in vision screenings in underdeveloped countries, and the U.S. Members work hard to raise money year-round to fund their annual trip to a third-world nation. Members will acquire skills which will be beneficial in professional education on these trips. The work prior to and during the trip is challenging but rewarding.

FCO at UABSO - Fellowship of Christian Optometrists

A nondenominational Christian organization designed to provide fellowship to optometrists and students. Activities include bi-weekly luncheon devotionals, social activities, and service projects which include helping those in need, (Jessie's Place, Angel Tree, Operation Christmas Child) and providing vision screenings in the U.S. and abroad. There are no fees for student membership.

NOSA -The National Optometric Student Association

NOSA is the student branch of the National Optometric Association. NOSA's mission is to advance the visual health of under-served communities by investing in the success of compassionate students who are eager to serve these communities. Members participate in community health fairs by doing vision screenings, speaking to local high schools and community groups, and sponsoring luncheon seminars.

OWNS - Ocular Wellness and Nutrition Society

The Ocular Wellness and Nutrition Society serves as a liaison in educating, guiding, and advising the optometric community at UABSO with information regarding the role of nutritional support as it relates to eye health and vision.

Private Practice Club

The Club of Private Practice Management exists to provide students with information and opportunities regarding private practice optometry and to aid in the transition from student to doctor. The club aims to explore the rewards, challenges, and opportunities of private practice through guest speakers, events, and workshops.

Spectrum Club at UABSO

The Spectrum Club focuses on outreach to the LGBTQ community regarding the importance of ocular health and routine eye examinations. The club also aims to educate professionals within the field of optometry on contemporary health issues within the LGBTQ community. The club features guest speakers, volunteer opportunities such as vision screenings, and an inclusive educational environment for all interested in expanding cultural awareness.

Student Affairs Student Ambassadors

This organization consists of an elite group of optometry students who promote a positive image of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry (UABSO) through its interactions with prospective students, current students' alumni, and other constituents.

SGA - Student Government Association

This organization serves as the student government. There is no out-of-pocket expense for the students for this organization. Major student activities include homecoming events, Eyeball in the spring, general body meetings, and other schoolwide events throughout the year. In addition, the SGA provides feedback to the student affairs team on student body needs.

FUNCTIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DIDACTIC AND CLINICAL OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION

To provide guidance to those considering optometry as a profession, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has established functional guidelines for optometric education. The ability to meet these guidelines, along with other criteria established by individual optometric institutions, is necessary for graduation from an optometric professional degree program. Note that there may be additional criteria established by State, Provincial, or Federal regulators for licensure as an optometrist.

One of the missions of each [school and college of optometry](#) is to produce graduates fully qualified to provide quality comprehensive eye care services to the public. To fulfill this mission, each institution must ensure that students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and skill in the provision of optometric care. Admission committees, therefore, consider a candidate's capacity to function effectively in the academic and clinical environments, as well as a candidate's academic qualifications and personal attributes.

The functional guidelines in optometric education require that the candidate/student possess appropriate abilities in the following areas: 1) observation 2) communication 3) sensory and motor coordination 4) intellectual: conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities and 5) behavioral and social attributes. Each of these areas is described in this document. Applicants are encouraged to connect with the individual institutions' accessibility services offices to learn about the process for requesting accommodations at each institution.

Observation Abilities

The student must be able to acquire a defined level of required knowledge as presented through lectures, laboratories, demonstrations, patient interaction and self-study. Acquiring this body of information necessitates the functional use of visual, auditory and somatic sensation enhanced by the functional use of other sensory modalities. Examples of these observational skills in which accurate information needs to be extracted in an efficient manner include:

a. Audio/Visual:

Reading and interpreting information from presentations, papers, slides, video and live demonstrations.

Discriminating numbers, images and patterns associated with diagnostic tests and instruments, including microscopic images of tissue in order to discern three-dimensional relationships, depth and color changes.

b. Tactile Abilities:

Palpating the eye and related areas to determine the integrity of the underlying structures.

Communication Abilities

The student must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently and sensitively with patients and their families, peers, staff, instructors and other members of the health care team. The student must be able to demonstrate established communication skills using traditional and alternative means. Examples of required communications skills include:

- Relating effectively and sensitively to patients, conveying compassion and empathy
- Perceiving verbal and non-verbal communication such as sadness, worry, agitation and lack of comprehension from patients
- Eliciting information from patients and observing changes in mood and activity
- Communicating quickly, effectively and efficiently in English in person and in writing with patients and other members of the health care team
- Reading and recording observations, test results and management plans accurately, in addition to completing assignments, patient records and correspondence accurately and in a timely manner

Sensory and Motor Coordination Abilities

The student must possess the sensory and motor skills necessary to perform an eye examination, including emergency care. In general, this requires sufficient exteroception sense (touch, pain, temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis and vibratory) and fine motor function (significant coordination and manual dexterity using arms, wrists, hands and fingers).

Examples of skill required include but are not limited to:

- Instillation of ocular pharmaceutical agents
- Insertion, removal and manipulation of contact lenses
- Assessment of blood pressure and pulse
- Perform minor surgical procedures such as the removal of foreign objects from the cornea
- Simultaneous manipulation of lenses, instruments and therapeutic agents and devices
- Reasonable facility of movement
- Injections into the eye, lids or limbs

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

Problem solving, a most critical skill, is essential for optometric students and must be performed quickly, especially in emergency situations. In order to be an effective problem solver, the student must be able to accurately and efficiently utilize such abilities as measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, judgment, investigation, memory, numerical recognition and synthesis. Examples of these abilities include being able to:

- Determine appropriate questions to be asked and clinical tests to be performed
- Identify and analyze significant findings from history, examination and other test data
- Demonstrate good judgment and provide a reasonable assessment, diagnosis and management of patients
- Retain, recall and obtain information in an efficient manner
- Identify and communicate the limits of one's knowledge and skill

Behavioral and Social Attributes

The student must possess the necessary behavioral and social attributes for the study and practice of optometry. Examples of such attributes include:

- Satisfactory emotional health required for full utilization of one's intellectual ability
- High ethical standards and integrity
- An empathy with patients and concern for their welfare
- Commitment to the optometric profession and its standards
- Effective interpersonal relationships with patients, peers and instructors
- Professional demeanor
- Effective functioning under varying degrees of stress and workload
- Adaptability to changing environments and uncertainties such as being considered an essential worker
- Positive acceptance of suggestions and constructive criticism

Candidates with questions or concerns about how their own conditions or disabilities might affect their ability to meet these functional guidelines are encouraged to meet with an optometry institution counselor prior to submitting an application.

First Approved by the ASCO Board of Directors on March 20, 1998

Revised and Approved: March 31, 2009

Revised and Approved: June 14, 2022

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR ENTRY-LEVEL OPTOMETRIST

Curriculum Committee School of Optometry

Effective November 3, 2025

One of the fundamental goals of the UAB School of Optometry is to identify, train and cultivate highly competent and ethical Doctors of Optometry who possess the foundational knowledge, clinical skills, and commitment to patient care necessary to excel in the evolving field of optometry.

Entry-level optometrists must be capable of independent evidence-based clinical practice of optometry as the primary healthcare practitioner of the eye and visual system who provides comprehensive eye and vision care. Graduating students must have shown proficiency in areas of contemporary optometric practice including evaluation/diagnosis and treatment/management of refractive conditions, diseases of the eye and associated systems, and rehabilitation, normalization, and enhancement of the visual system. The goals and competencies listed below will be modified periodically to meet the evolving needs of the profession and ensure that the students are educated to meet the standards to practice procedures which are allowable in at least 10% of states' scope of practice. The UABSO curriculum will reflect the frequency and criticality of the conditions that the optometrist will encounter and will evolve as the scope of optometric practice evolves. This information can be found within the UABSO Curriculum Tracks within the UABSO Curriculum List.

By the time of graduation, students must be able to:

- I. Demonstrate basic life support skills for emergencies encountered in independent optometric practice**
 - a. Maintain CPR certification throughout clinical program
 - b. Demonstrate proficiency in emergency simulation activities in applicable coursework
 - c. Recognition of, and use of appropriate management for, medical emergencies in patient care situations as they arise within clinical coursework
- II. Identify, record, and analyze pertinent history and problems presented by the patient**
 - a. Demonstrate proficiency in the skill of taking, documenting and analyzing a patient history in didactic coursework
 - b. Obtain and effectively document and utilize patient history in patient care within clinical coursework
- III. Examine and evaluate the patient to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis**
 - a. Demonstrate proficiency in clinical skills necessary for accurate data collection in didactic coursework
 - b. Demonstrate and effectively utilize knowledge, clinical integration and other clinical skills in patient care situations within clinical coursework for appropriate diagnosis of vision and ocular conditions
- IV. Formulate a rational treatment and management plan and understand the implications of various treatment and management options**
 - a. Demonstrate proficiency in clinical decision making in didactic coursework
 - b. Demonstrate the ability to formulate treatment and management of vision and ocular conditions; demonstrate effective clinical decision-making in patient care within clinical coursework for vision and ocular conditions
- V. Provide relevant patient education and counseling**
 - a. Demonstrate proficiency in patient education and counseling in didactic coursework
 - b. Demonstrate relevant patient education and counseling in patient care within clinical coursework for vision and ocular conditions
- VI. Use the knowledge of optometry's role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of individual patients and the public health aspects related to the populations being served**
 - a. Demonstrate proficiency in the care of systemic conditions in didactic coursework
 - b. Demonstrate and effectively utilize knowledge of systemic conditions

VII. Apply knowledge of interprofessional collaborative care, ethics, and medico-legal aspects for the delivery of optometric care.

- a. Demonstrate proficiency in knowledge of interprofessional collaborative care, ethics, and medico-legal aspects for the delivery of optometric care in didactic coursework
- b. Demonstrate and effectively utilize knowledge of interprofessional collaborative care, ethics, and medico-legal aspects for the delivery of optometric care in-patient care within clinical coursework for vision and ocular conditions

VIII. Demonstrate an understanding of research principles and conduct to critically assess the literature

- a. Demonstrate proficiency in research principles, literature assessment, and evidence-based medicine in didactic coursework
- b. Demonstrate and effectively utilize research principles, literature assessment, and evidence-based medicine in patient care within clinical coursework for vision and ocular conditions.

IX. Demonstrate effective and culturally sensitive communications, both oral and written, with other professionals and patients and people in the community

- a. Demonstrate proficiency in communication in didactic coursework
- b. Demonstrate and effectively communicate in patient care within clinical coursework (e.g. 3rd year observation, Primary Care and other rotations), for vision and ocular conditions

X. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and philosophy of optometric practice management

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of practice management in didactic coursework
- b. Demonstrate understanding and proficiency, and effectively communicate to patients, optometric practice management concepts (e.g. billing and coding, insurance, third party payors, optical and contact lens material management).

For each of the above competencies, applicable didactic and clinical course metrics and evaluation tools for determining proficiency are as follows. These courses are outlined within the UABSO Curricular tracks within the UABSO Curriculum.

Coursework	Key Assessment tools:
Didactic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course exams and other assessments evaluate proficiency in applicable competencies Grading rubrics for exams and lab practicals and other assessments evaluate hands-on ability in applicable competencies
Clinical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grading rubrics in Meditrek standardize expectations in clinical courses. Clinical training and observation tools as defined by clinical course syllabi are additional assessment measures (e.g. Clinical Proficiency Exam, 3rd year patient observation).

UAB STUDENT HANDBOOK

Student should note that the complete UAB Student Handbook can be found on the University website at <http://catalog.uab.edu/student-handbook/>. Student can refer to the website for complete and updated information. The University of Alabama at Birmingham's Student Handbook offers the University community information about a number of resources, services, policies, and procedures. Among other things, the Handbook includes a link to the Code of Student Conduct, which outlines the University's expectations regarding student behavior. It is the responsibility of each University student to become and stay familiar with

the Code of Student Conduct, which references other University rules and policies applicable to students.

The following list is a sample of the topics contained in the UAB Student Handbook.

[Student Affairs](#)

[Campus Dining](#)

[Campus Recreation](#)

[Career and Professional Development](#)

[Disability Support Services](#)

[Hill Student Center](#)

[One Stop Student Services](#)

[Student Counseling Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Housing and Residence Life](#)

[Student Involvement and Leadership](#)

[Student Media](#)

[Title IX Policy | Title IX](#)

[Veterans Services](#)

Drug-Free Campus and Workplace Policy

The University is committed to maintaining a healthy campus environment, free of the effects of alcohol and substance abuse. UAB's [Drug-Free Campus and Workplace Policy](#) applies to all members of the University community, including all students, faculty, staff, as well as visitors. It applies to behavior that occurs on the University campus, on property owned or controlled by the University, or at University-sponsored or University-supervised activities. Every UAB community member has a personal responsibility to adhere to all applicable laws, policies, and regulations concerning the use of alcohol or drugs.

Reporting Improper Conduct

[Student Conduct Code Alleged Violation Referral](#)

Report a Student of Concern

[Student in Distress Referral](#)