The Pre-Optometry program of study at East Tennessee State University prepares students for application to a four-year Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree program. The majority of students accepted to a school of optometry have completed a bachelor’s degree.

**Careers in Optometry**

Optometrists examine the eyes and other parts of the body related to vision. They also diagnose, treat, and manage diseases, injuries, and other disorders of the eyes. They prescribe contact lenses or eyeglasses as needed.

Many optometrists own their own practices and may spend a considerable amount of time on general business activities such as hiring employees and ordering supplies.

Some optometrists spend much of their time providing specialized care, particularly if they are working in a group practice with other optometrists or doctors.

**Employment Opportunities**

- **33,100** jobs in 2012
- **41,200** jobs projected in 2022

**Median Annual Wage**

$97,820 in 2012

for more information, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Pre-optometry is not a major.** Therefore, you must choose a major (and minor, if appropriate) by the time you earn 60 credit hours. You do not have to major in a science field. Choose a course of study that interests you. Optometry schools look for applicants who are well-rounded, who reason and communicate well, and have demonstrated empathy. It is true that students who have an extensive science background have an easier time with the basic science components of optometry school than do non-science majors. Optometry schools do not assume, however, that you have had any courses other than those required.

**Advisement**

You must meet with your advisor each semester. You are required to meet with your pre-professional and major advisors each term before registering for the next semester. Students who receive scholarships or participate in specialized ETSU programs (such as athletics or Honors College programs) must also seek advisement from those departments. Serious consequences can occur if students fail to meet with advisors (e.g., failure to graduate on time, missing appropriate courses to prepare for the OAT, etc.).

**Timeline**

- Class of 2016:
  - Freshman Summer: Complete prerequisite requirements.
  - Sophomore Summer: Build professional relationships with professors, advisors, and professionals for letters of recommendation.
  - Senior: Choose a major.
  - Freshman Summer: Gain research experience.
  - Sophomore Summer: Campus visits to professional schools of interest.
  - Junior Summer: Collect letters of recommendation.
  - Application:
    - Committee Evaluation
    - Take OAT
  - Interviews

**Committee Evaluation**

**Take OAT**

**Application**

**Interviews**

**Medical Professions Advisement Office**

423.439.5602
ARC in Culp Center
What does it take to get into optometry school?

**GPA**

3.6–3.08

**OAT Score**

349–296

highest and lowest average GPA among admitted students for all schools that reported to the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) in 2014

highest and lowest average test score among admitted students for all ASCO schools in 2014

The OAT is a computerized exam administered through the Optometric Admission Testing Program. This test is required to be considered for admission to most optometry schools. Examinees are allowed to take the OAT an unlimited number of times but must wait at least 90 days between test dates. Students should not take the OAT until they have completed all prerequisite courses.

Students are encouraged to begin the application process at the end of their junior year.

All 21 schools and colleges of optometry participate in the Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS), which is online at [www.optomcas.org](http://www.optomcas.org).

Application deadlines differ from school to school. Therefore, it is up to the student to ensure that applications are submitted on time.

Many optometry schools require students to submit a composite letter of evaluation during the application process. The Medical Professions Advisement staff is available to assist students through this process.

---

### Core Preparation Courses *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Required Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>BIOL 1110/1111, BIOL 1120/1121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Chemistry</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>CHEM 1110/1111, CHEM 1120/1121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CHEM 2010/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Physics**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PHYS 2110 and PHYS 2120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>BIOL 4147/4157 or BIOL 4167/4177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>ENGL 1010, ENGL 1020, SPCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HSCI 3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>MATH 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MATH 1530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>PSYC 1310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>General ed social / behavioral science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Recommended Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Required Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Anatomy$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HSCI 3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Physiology$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HSCI 3020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Biology</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>BIOL 3150/3151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemistry II</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CHEM 2020/2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Different schools may have different prerequisite requirements. It is up to the student to research and ensure the required courses are completed before application to the preferred school(s) of interest.

**General Physics (PHYS 2010/11 and PHYS 2020/21) may be substituted, however, Technical Physics is recommended.

$A two-semester sequence of organic chemistry is a prerequisite for BIOL 4147/57 or BIOL 4167/77.

$These classes may be required by some optometry schools.

---

### Suggested two-year schedule for pre-optometry students

**Freshman**

**Fall**

CHEM 1110/11
Biol 1110/11
MATH 1530
ENGL 1010
PREH 1350

**Spring**

CHEM 1120/21
BIO 1120/21
MATH 1720/1910
ENGL 1020
ELECTIVE

**Sophomore**

**Fall**

CHEM 2010/11
PHYS 2110
SPCH$*  
PSYC 1310
ELECTIVE

**Spring**

CHEM 2020/21
PHYS 2120
ELECTIVE
ELECTIVE
ELECTIVE

*Students should maintain a minimum of 17-19 credit hours per semester.

$Consult with your advisor before choosing a speech course.
Alpha Epsilon Delta – National Pre-Health Honor Society (AED)
AED functions as a health pre-professional honor society encouraging excellence in scholarship. It emphasizes the importance of health education and promotes cooperation and contact among professionals.

Pre-Optometry Student Organization (POSO)
POSO is a club designed to help pre-optometry students learn about the field, get involved, meet local optometrists, and become competitive applicants to optometry school.

Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)
HOSA provides students with knowledge and understanding of various health care careers. It also provides students opportunities to compete against each other in various state and regional events to learn about current health issues.

Minority Association of Pre-Health Students (MAPS)
This organization is open to all ETSU students. MAPS aims to provide students with valuable opportunities in the community to enhance their knowledge of the health care field they are planning to enter. Opportunities include job shadowing, volunteering, and research. MAPS is also geared toward forming friendships among members.

What else can I do to strengthen my application to optometry school?

RELATED EXPERIENCE
Students are encouraged to explore the field of optometry either through employment or as a volunteer. Optometry schools want to know that a student has worked in the field, observed what is involved, and still has the desire to continue in that profession. Students should gain as much experience as possible without sacrificing grades.

EXTRACURRICULARS
The admissions committees of optometry schools are interested in seeing a range of extracurricular activities, especially those demanding a significant leadership role. Students should demonstrate their ability to balance full academic schedules with extracurricular involvement on and off campus and/or through employment opportunities. ETSU has many organizations that students can join. Students should visit the SORC located on the first floor of the Culp center or www.etsu.edu/sorc for more information regarding extracurricular activities. It is not beneficial to simply join an organization; you must demonstrate leadership qualities!

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE
Optometry schools are looking for candidates who express a commitment to community service. Students should seek volunteer projects that focus on giving back to the community. Students are encouraged to look for volunteer opportunities related to the optometry field.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE
Please consider personal email addresses when corresponding with professional schools. First impressions are often based on correspondence and email addresses should be appropriate for professional communication. Messages and images sent electronically are reflections of judgment and potential suitability for professional careers. Inappropriate behaviors shared on an accessible venue can be viewed and shared by anyone, possibly compromising your chances of admission to optometry school.

WATCH WHAT YOU POST!