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 eyeglasses or contact lenses as needed. Optometrists typically do the following:

- Perform vision tests to check for sight problems, such as nearsightedness or farsightedness
- Check for eye diseases, such as glaucoma
- Prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses, and medications
- Provide other treatments, such as vision therapy or low-vision rehabilitation
- Provide pre- and postoperative care to patients undergoing eye surgery—for example, examining a patient’s eyes the day after surgery
- Evaluate patients for the presence of diseases such as diabetes and refer them to other health care providers as needed
- Promote eye health by counseling patients, including explaining how to clean and wear contact lenses

Some optometrists spend much of their time providing specialized care, particularly if they are working in a group practice or with other optometrists or doctors. For example, some optometrists mostly treat patients with only partial or no sight, a condition known as low vision. Others may focus on pre or postoperative care if they work in a facility that does many eye surgeries. Optometrists may also teach or do research in optometry colleges or work as consultants in the eye care industry.

Many optometrists own their practice and may spend more time on general business activities such as hiring employees and ordering supplies. Optometrists should not be confused with ophthalmologists and with dispensing opticians. Ophthalmologists are physicians who perform eye surgery and treat eye disease in addition to examining eyes and prescribing eyeglasses and contact lenses. Dispensing opticians fit and adjust eyeglasses and in some states fill contact lens prescriptions that an optometrist or ophthalmologist has written. (Occupational Outlook Handbook)

A minimum of 90 semester hours are required for admission at most optometry schools. However, the majority of students entering optometry school have a baccalaureate degree. Therefore, students pursuing a pre-optometry curriculum are expected to choose a major so that they can be working towards a baccalaureate degree concurrently with the pre-optometry program. This requires a major/minor combination or a comprehensive major as well as completion of the UNK general studies requirements and other degree requirements as set forth in the college catalog. Optometry schools do not specify which major a student should pursue in conjunction with his/her pre-optometry studies. Gaining acceptance into a optometry school is a very competitive process. Completion of the pre-requisite courses does not automatically guarantee admission.

Students should check with the specific school(s) to which they intend to apply to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled as requirements for admission vary.

**1. Required Courses**

Take one of the following options:

**Take these 2 courses:**
- BIOL 103GS General Biology 4
- BIOL 215GS Human Physiology 4

**OR take these 2 courses:**
- BIOL 225 Anatomy and Physiology 4
- BIOL 226 Anatomy and Physiology 4

Take all of the following:

- BIOL 211GS Human Microbiology 4
- CHEM 160GS General Chemistry 4
- CHEM 161GS General Chemistry 4
- CHEM 360 Organic Chemistry 5
- CHEM 361 Organic Chemistry 5
- CHEM 351 Biochemistry 4
- MATH 102GS** College Algebra 3
- MATH 103GS** Plane Trigonometry 3
- MATH 115GS Calculus I with Analytical Geometry 5
- STAT 241GS Elementary Statistics 3
- PHYS 205GS General Physics 5
- PHYS 206GS General Physics 5
- PSY 203GS General Psychology 3
- ENG 101 Introduction to Academic Writing 3
- ENG 102GS Academic Writing and Research 3
- SPCH 100GS Fundamentals of Speech Communication 3
- ENG 232GS Literature 3

**2. Strongly recommended:**

- FAMS 110GS Introduction to Nutrition 3
- BIOL 465S Physiology 3

**Students with sufficient math preparation may enter the mathematics portion at a higher level; however some schools do require two courses in mathematics. Most schools require a course in calculus.**

### Academic Guidelines

An overall GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) is preferred; however, a higher GPA is preferred and will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of “C” or better. A grade of “C-” will not be accepted. Students searching for electives outside their major requirement should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly.

### Non-Academic Guidelines

There is no magic formula for acceptance into professional school. Admission is based on GPA, test scores, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Shadowing and medical experiences are of utmost importance. Students should plan to shadow a minimum of 40 hours in their selected profession. Health Sciences offers opportunities to meet these non-academic guidelines through the Shadowing Program, the Health Science Club, and volunteer experiences. Research experience is not required, but will be looked upon favorably. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career. Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others.

### The Application Process

Students will make application to most optometry schools through a centralized application service called the Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS). The application and further information may be accessed at www.optomcas.org. The centralized application service allows students to fill out one application to apply to multiple schools. The application comes open in summer and early application is strongly encouraged. Students should make application in the summer or early fall of the calendar year proceeding the year in which they hope to enroll in professional school. Applicants should not wait for OAT scores, transcripts, or other application materials before applying through OptomCAS. Check with the schools to which you are applying to verify their policies and procedures regarding supplemental applications.
Entrance Examination Requirement (OAT)

All U.S. optometry schools require applicants to take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT). It is preferred that the OAT is taken no later than August of the calendar year preceding the year in which the applicant wishes to enroll in an optometry program. Students register online at https://www.ada.org/oat/index.html. The test consists of four sections: Survey of the Natural Sciences (Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry), Reading Comprehension, Physics and Quantitative Reasoning. Scores range from 200 – 400. To aid in OAT preparation, Health Sciences offers a Test Prep Review Program every spring semester. For more information, please contact Health Sciences.

Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation

Letters of evaluation will be required of applicants. Letters from a faculty member, optometrist, academic advisor, or employer would be appropriate. Information about the non-academic character of a student would be most useful as academic information is already in the application. Letters should be submitted directly to OptomCAS.

Interviews

Most schools screen applicants with some form of personal interview. The format of the interview may vary depending on the schools to which students are applying.

Criminal Background Checks

Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

Citizenship/International Students

Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

Websites

Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry  www.opted.org
UNK Health Sciences  www.unk.edu/healthsciences

Suggested Sequence of Key Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CHEM 160GS</td>
<td>CHEM 161GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MATH: See advisor for appropriate course placement.</td>
<td>BIOL course: See advisor for suggestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHEM 360</td>
<td>CHEM 361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIOL 225 (recommended)</td>
<td>BIOL 226 (recommended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PHYS 205GS</td>
<td>PHYS 206GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHEM 351</td>
<td>Register to take the OAT in late spring or summer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete optometry school application in the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Complete final major courses.</td>
<td>Complete final major courses.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Advanced biology is highly recommended, especially a course dealing with cell structure and function. Courses in anatomy and physiology are also recommended.
- A MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) or higher is a pre-requisite for CHEM 160.
- A minimum MATH ACT score of 20 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) (Grade of B+ or better) or higher is required for entry into PHYS 205.
- The courses suggested above should be completed prior to taking the OAT.
- It is not recommended to take any of the above science courses during a summer session, especially if the material will be covered on the OAT.

Students who are accepted into optometry school prior to completing a baccalaureate degree at UNK may be eligible to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Health Sciences if they have completed all General Studies requirements and have at least 85 semester hours completed in pre-optometry studies.