



Optometrist Training and Education

- Doctors of optometry are trained to **examine, diagnose, treat and manage disorders** that affect the eye or vision.
- After attending a university or college for their undergraduate education, optometry students concentrate **specifically on the structure function and disorders of the eye** for four additional years during their graduate education to earn their **doctoral degree**.
- While concentrating on the eye and visual system, optometrists also **study general health** in courses such as human anatomy, biochemistry and physiology.
- In addition to their formal, doctoral-level training, all optometrists participate in **ongoing continuing education** courses to stay current on the latest standards of care and to maintain their licenses to practice.

As primary eye care providers, doctors of optometry are an integral part of the health care team, **earning their doctoral degree** just as dentists, podiatrists and other doctors do.

- Prior to admittance into optometry school, optometrists complete four years of undergraduate study, culminating in a bachelor's degree. Required undergraduate coursework for pre-optometry students is extensive and covers a wide variety of advanced health, science and mathematics courses.
- Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, **doctoral-level** study **concentrating on the eye, vision and associated systemic disease**. In addition to profession-specific courses, optometrists are required to take **systemic health courses** that focus on a patient's overall medical condition as it relates to the eyes.
- Upon completion of optometry school, candidates graduate from their **accredited colleges of optometry** and hold the Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree. Optometry schools are **accredited** by the **Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE)**. Both the **U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation** recognize the ACOE as the reliable authority concerning the quality of education of the programs that attain accredited status.
- Some optometrists participate in **residency programs** following optometry school. There are **154 accredited residency programs** available. Some of the concentrations offered are: Primary Eye Care, Geriatric Optometry, **Ocular Disease and Refractive and Ocular Surgery**.
- Optometrists must pass **a rigorous national examination administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO)**. The three part test includes Basic Science (includes immunology and pharmacology) Patient Assessment and Management (includes diagnosis and treatment) and a Clinical Skills performance test on current optometric procedures demonstrating these skills on patients.
- In addition to being the experts on eye and vision diseases and disorders, doctors of optometry have the education and training to diagnose the **ocular manifestations of diseases that affect the entire body**, such as diabetes and hypertension.

Sources: the United States Department of Education, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, the National Board of Examiners in Optometry, the American Optometric Association.