

## Doctor of Optometry Timeline and Checklist

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year

- Register for the Pre-Health Program.
- Attend the informational meetings for the Pre-Health Program.
- Make an appointment with the pre-health advisor to discuss how to sequence classes, experiences that will help you prepare for optometry school, and the different resources on campus.
- Investigate career information to identify what it means to be an optometrist and the admission requirements for optometry.
- Start taking the core courses that need to be completed before taking the OAT entrance exam required by the OptomCAS. Focus on academic coursework and how to be a successful college student.
- Look for meaningful opportunities to become involved in research, job shadowing, volunteering, clubs, and mentoring.
- Once your general chemistry and biology sequence are complete, let the pre-health advisor know so you will be signed up for the Pre-Health Advising Committee.
- Start to develop relationships with faculty, staff advisors and faculty mentors at DePaul
- **SUMMER: Work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field.**
- **SUMMER: Take summer courses if desired or necessary.**

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

- Attend the informational meetings for the Pre-Health Program.
- Meet with the pre-health advisor to make sure you're progressing through your requirements.
- Continue taking the core courses that need to be completed before taking the OAT entrance exam required by the Optometry programs. Focus on coursework and achieving a high GPA.
- Continue to investigate the career information to identify the admission requirements for Optometry school.
- Look for opportunities to be involved in meaningful activities (volunteering, research, etc.) that will strengthen your application.
- Attend local graduate school fairs and open houses.
- Apply for research opportunities that you can participate in over the school year or summer.
- **SUMMER: Work or volunteer in the health field**
- **SUMMER: Participate in summer enrichment, research, or internship program.**
- **SUMMER: Learn more about the OAT and research OAT prep courses opportunities**
- **SUMMER: Familiarize yourself with the Optometry Centralized Application System (OPTOMCAS).**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year (or the year prior to applying)

- Meet with pre-health advisor and PAC faculty mentor to make sure all coursework is on track.
- Begin compiling a list of specific optometry programs that will meet your professional objectives.
- Complete pre-optometry coursework that will be covered on the OAT.
- Make sure you have established well maintained relationships with your staff advisors, professors, PAC faculty mentor, and healthcare professionals. Start to consider from whom you can receive letters of recommendations.
- Look for opportunities to continue to be involved (volunteering, shadowing, etc.) that will strengthen your application.
- Attend a personal statement writing workshop and begin writing your statement early. Be prepared to make multiple drafts as this statement is critical in the review of your application.
- If you are prepared and ready, register for the Optometry Admission Test (OAT)
- Take the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT)
- Prepare a "plan b" if you are not admitted to the schools of your choice.
- **SUMMER: If you are intending to start your chosen program immediately following graduation, you should begin the application process, including requesting letters of recommendation from your professors. The OPTOMCAS will open up early July.**
- **SUMMER: Double check dates and deadlines and review, edit, and submit OPTOMCAS application early**
- **SUMMER: Submit transcripts, complete supplemental applications, and contact those who will be submitting LORs for you to check on progress.**

### 4<sup>th</sup> Year

- Prepare for interviews by participating in a mock interview
- Meet with your PAC faculty mentor to discuss status of your application.
- Continue to maintain a strong GPA
- If admitted make final decisions about your choice of school and notify schools you will not be attending.
- If admitted to Optometry schools, apply for financial aid (FAFSA) by March 1<sup>st</sup>
- If admitted, pay seat deposit for the institution of your choice
- Let the pre-health advisor know what schools you we

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\_\_\_\_ **1. RESEARCH** the Optometry schools you are interested in. The first step in preparing for optometry school is finding out programs that you are interested in. A good place to start is the Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS). The OptomCAS provides you with information about several all the optometry program in the U.S, their requirements, and their timelines. <http://www.optomcas.org/>

\_\_\_\_ **2. PREREQUISITES:** each school has different timelines and prerequisites. Research each school carefully to make sure you have met all the requirements for the application

Required		Highly Recommended
General Biology (12 quarter hours)	Human Anatomy (4 quarter hours)	Cell Biology (1 quarter)
General Chemistry ( 12 quarter hours)	Physiology (4 quarter hours)	Genetics (1 quarter)
General Physics (12 quarter hours)	Organic Chemistry (4-8 quarter hours)	Speech (1 quarter)
English (8-12 quarter hours)	Microbiology (4 quarter hours)	
Calculus (4-8 quarter hours)	Statistics (4 quarter hours)	
Biochemistry (4-8 quarter hours)	Psychology (4 quarter hours)	

**\*This is a typical example of what a optometry school may require – make sure you check each school for their specific requirements.**

\_\_\_\_ **3. REGISTER** for the Pre-Health Program

\_\_\_\_ **4.GPA:** The higher the GPA, the more competitive you will be. Plan on applying to at least 5 programs at minimum, the average GPA for Illinois programs is a 3.6. The higher your GPA the better chance of being admitted to a optometry school.

\_\_\_\_ **5.KNOW** the applications start date and deadlines along with all prerequisites needed for each school you are interested in. The OptomCAS application opens in early July.

\_\_\_\_ **6.EXPERIENCE:** Some optometry programs require shadowing and health care hours. Check each school carefully for what their requirements are. Even if a school does not require hours it is vital that you get experience in the optometry and health care field. Start early and get as much experience in optometry, research, and health care as you can.

\_\_\_\_ **7.BE INVOLVED:** The more well-rounded your academic career the more competitive you will be. Be involved in activities such as research, community service, work, and extracurricular activities that are meaningful and unique.

\_\_\_\_ **8. RECOMMENDATIONS:** Typically optometry programs do not require committee letters, therefore, line up 4 recommendations early on. The OptomCAS will tell you which types of recommendation each school requires and accepts. If unsure contact the schools you are applying to directly to determine what types of references they prefer. Recommendations through OptomCAS are electronic.

\_\_\_\_ **9. OAT:** Register for the OAT at least 3-4 months prior to taking the OAT and at least 3 months prior to the application opening. The average OAT score for schools Optometry schools in Illinois is a 325. However, the higher the OAT score the better chance of being accepted into an optometry school.

\_\_\_\_ **10. COMPOSE:** Start to write your personal essay prior to the application in a word document. Each specific school may have a supplemental essay as well. Once you have completed your essay make sure you edit it carefully and have others edit it as well.

\_\_\_\_ **11. REQUEST** official transcripts to be sent to you to aid you in filling out the coursework one month prior to your application open date.

\_\_\_\_ **12. APPLY/DOUBLE CHECK/SUBMIT:** The earlier you apply the better. Some schools have rolling admission. Get all your application materials ready a month prior to the application open date, fill out the application, double/triple check for errors, and then submit.