



Opting Not to Complete a Bachelor's Degree Before Optometry School:

What are the pros and cons of electing not to complete a bachelor's degree before optometry school?

To be considered for admission to SCCO's professional OD program, either a four-year baccalaureate degree or completing a minimum of 90 semester/135 quarter units of undergraduate study will qualify an applicant for admission.

Points to consider should you decide to enter optometry school without completing a bachelor's degree:

- Forego expenses related to completing the last term of undergrad (i.e. tuition, cost of living expenses, health care insurance...etc.)
- For each sequential year in optometry school tuition increases incrementally, so starting a year earlier will reduce these costs
- Completing an OD degree one year earlier means:
 - You will be a wage earner as an optometrist one year earlier
 - You may begin your personal life one year sooner should including plans such as marriage / family
- Having an OD degree and not a bachelor's degree would not interfere with the pursuit of further graduate education such as a master's degree or PhD
- The OD degree is considered a terminal degree; for your professional title, it will exceed importance of either a BS or BA degree:
 - As an optometrist with a bachelor's degree, your title becomes John Doe, OD and not John Doe, BS, OD
 - For example, if you complete a graduate degree such as a master's degree or a PhD, your title would then become John Doe, OD, PhD
- Very few optometry schools require a bachelor's degree; the ones that do are typically public institutions whose administration requires a bachelor's degree to advance in their institution to graduate level studies, optometry being an example of such
- Should you have successful academic performance in undergrad and solid OAT scores, having a bachelor's degree will not make you any more competitive as an applicant to SCCO's program

Will I be considered a less competitive applicant if I do not complete a bachelor's degree?
The answer is "No."

Will I be less competitive when in the interview if I do not complete a bachelor's degree?
The answer is "No."

Will not having a bachelor's degree make me a less competitive applicant for an optometric residency program?

The answer is "No."

Will not having a bachelor's degree be problematic when I seek employment as an optometrist?

Many optometrists currently practicing do not have bachelor's degrees, so in general, the answer is "No."

Is a bachelor's degree required to apply for SCCO's Master of Vision Science program?

Yes, it is. Because this program accepts international students, a bachelor's degree is required.

Will not having a bachelor's degree be problematic if I decide to seek other options for employment such as consulting, private industry, or in research?

What comes into consideration more for these positions is having a graduate degree, either a master's degree or PhD and not a bachelor's degree.

Will not having a bachelor's degree be problematic if I decide to seek positions of leadership in organized optometry, such as the American Optometric Association?

The answer is "No."

Deciding to Opt for No Bachelor's Degree? Let's Map Your Course...

Because your will have less time to prepare for the optometry school admission process, here are considerations that will help you use your time most efficiently:

Considerations:

- Admissions cycle through which you will apply opens July 1, which is 13 months ahead of Fall matriculation:
 - When should I take all the classes?
 - When will I submit my application?
 - When will I take the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT)?
 - How will I spend my time outside of class to insure that I'm a competitive applicant?

Let's take them one by one:

When should I take the all the classes?

- Review the prerequisite requirements located here on our website:
<https://www.ketchum.edu/optometry/requirements>
- In lieu of a bachelor's degree, you will need to complete either 90 semester units or 135 quarter units of coursework
- Check your school's course catalog, plan out what classes you're going to take, keeping in mind that the longest "series" is all the chemistry courses:

- General chemistry 1 and 2, organic chemistry, and biochemistry.(put the next bullet point after this one)
 - Because they serve as prerequisites for each serial course, start with general chemistry right away
- Additional considerations:
 - SCCO accepts AP credit for prerequisite coursework, and college credits awarded as AP credits do count toward the requisite 90 semester/135 quarter units
 - See this FAQ regarding how to submit your AP credits to us: <https://optometryadmissions.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/ap-credits-satisfying-pre-req-requirements1.pdf>
 - SCCO accepts courses completed online for prerequisites that do not require labs:
 - While it's probably best to take a majority of your classes in person due to this condensed timeline, some reasons for taking online vs. in person courses would include:
 - Full course loads during normal terms and needing to do a few summer courses
 - Your school doesn't offer or won't allow you to take certain classes unless you have a specific major
 - Be sure to check this FAQ with guidelines for how to choose an acceptable online courses: <https://optometryadmissions.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/online-course-policy2.pdf>
- Just because a course is listed in the course catalog doesn't mean it's offered every term:
 - Make sure you check to see if the course you plan to take in a fall term is actually offered in that year's class roster
 - Double check to make sure you have or will have completed any prerequisite course to be eligible to take the course you seek to complete
- Timeline strategy for when to take the OAT:
 - We will cover timing suggestions later in this FAQ
 - When it comes to planning out coursework, consider front loading classes in your schedule that will cover material you'll need to know well for the OAT, namely general chemistry, organic chemistry, physics, and biology
 - Check out the "OAT Exam Guide" located here for a breakdown of which topics are covered on the exam: <https://www.ada.org/en/oat/guide>
- Anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry are frequently completed by applicants online:
- You may have courses underway when you apply, just as long as you have a tenable plan to finish them by August 15 (generally the start of the fall term)
- That goes for any of the prerequisites, that you may finish them up in the summer term preceding fall matriculation

When will I apply?

- The Admissions Cycle runs from July 1 through April 1 each year, with Orientation taking place mid-August
- SCCO utilizes Rolling Admissions, so in general, apply as early as possible for best results; however, when opting for the 90 semester or 135 quarter unit option, all things considered, the best time to apply would be mid-cycle just after grades from your fall term have posted
- If you submit your application through OptomCAS as late as late December/early January, your application will likely be verified and released to us by the end of January, leaving time to qualify to interview before the cycle concludes in early May
- See our “How To Apply” page on the website for more details:
<https://www.ketchum.edu/optometry/how-apply-scco>
- For a comprehensive article that includes tips and recommendations for a competitive application, please visit SCCO’s Admissions Blog:
<https://optometryadmissions.com/applying-through-optomcas-your-application-through-its-stages/>

When will I take the OAT?

- The deadline to take the OAT is April 1; however we recommend taking it much sooner than this late date
- Submit your application before you take the OAT; however you must have taken the OAT to advance in our process and on to receive an interview invitation
- If your plan is to submit your application late December/early January, you have 2 options of when to take the OAT:
 - Before you begin the fall term so as not being overwhelmed to study for the OAT while taking a full course load
 - During the holiday break from school (late December/ early January)
- It comes down to when you feel the most prepared to take this important exam
- For OAT prep tips, visit the OAT section of our Admissions Blog:
<https://optometryadmissions.com/category/oat/>

How will I spend my time outside of class to insure that I’m a competitive applicant?

Some students are concerned that with a shortened timeline they may not be able to do enough outside of class to stand out as an applicant. It’s not necessary to have a lot of time but rather, it’s what you do with your time that counts!

- Start by reading our Competitive Applicant Profile located here:
<https://optometryadmissions.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/competitive-applicant-profile2.pdf>
- Because you’ll be taking full course loads, your free time will be limited so try to maximize it by being strategic about your shadowing, community service, club involvement, employment, etc.

- If your school has a pre-optometry club, this is a great way to be involved with the profession and engage in community service
- SCCO has an Alumni Shadowing Program that you can request to join:
<https://optometryadmissions.com/brochures-and-catalogs/scco-alumni-shadowing-program-for-pre-optometry-students/>

If you don't see any local options, feel free to conduct informational interviews over the phone. To learn more about our program and the profession, visit:

<https://optometryadmissions.com/2013/10/16/shadowing-try-the-informational-interview/>

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