Getting Started with Your OptomCAS Application

- **What is OptomCAS?**
  - The Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS) simplifies the process of applying to optometry programs. You start by selecting the programs you wish to apply to, then you submit one application that includes all necessary materials. Once received by OptomCAS, your application and materials go through a verification process before being transmitted to all of your selected programs. [Click here](#) to start your application.

- **How long does the application process take?**
  - It’s important you apply as early as possible since completing your application can be a lengthy process, and since application processing times vary throughout the cycle. The following slides include a suggested timeline and links to information to keep the application process on track. This timeline may need to be adjusted based on your programs’ deadlines and requirements.
Do Your Own Research


- This presentation is meant to serve as a resource during this application cycle.
  - It does NOT cover all aspects of the application, so you must do your own research!
  - Review the OptomCAS Instructions for more detailed information.
  - You can also contact OptomCAS for further assistance (please read FAQ first):
    - Phone: 617-612-2888 (applicant inquiries only)
    - Email: optomcasinfo@optomcas.org
    - Hours of operation: Monday - Friday (9:00 am - 5:00 pm Eastern Time)

- OptomCAS verification process may take up to six weeks after your application, transcripts, and payment are received.

  - Directory of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
  - Deadlines and Requirements
  - School and College Prerequisites
  - Letters of Evaluation
  - Frequently Asked Questions
  - Applicant Responsibilities
  - OptomCAS Course Subjects
  - How OptomCAS GPAs are Calculated
When To Apply/Checklist

- OptomCAS Opens: June 27, 2019.
- Before this date, you should have:
  - Completed all pre-OAT prerequisite courses listed on the Pre-Optometry Quick Facts Sheet and have a plan to complete the rest of the required prerequisite courses for all optometry schools that you wish to apply. View the ASCO General and School-Specific Prerequisites.
  - Registered for an OATPIN.
  - Read through the Prometric OAT Checklist.
  - Taken or scheduled the OAT through Prometric. If you need accommodations click on the OAT Accommodations Request Form.
  - Asked your (4) evaluators to write letters of recommendation (typically, one optometrist, two hard science professors and one professional letter). Review the Letters of Evaluation Requirements for each school or college of optometry to which you are interested in applying.
  - Completed your personal statement (4500 characters max)
  - Compiled your resume
  - Documented your shadowing hours with an optometrist
  - Printed out an unofficial transcript to help you list your courses within the application
  - OptomCAS recommends you use the most up-to-date versions of Firefox or Google Chrome
  - Read the Applicant Responsibilities checklist for OptomCAS
  - Review ASCO Functional Standards
Creating An Account

- Click [here](#) to create an OptomCAS account.
  - Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the “Login to the 2019-2020 OptomCAS Application.” It will take you to the application login where you will create your account.

- To create your account, you must select at least one program to which to apply. Once your account is established you may add or remove programs as needed before you submit your application.

To create an account:
- From the application home page, click [Create an Account](#).
- Complete the required fields, agree to the terms and conditions, then click [Create my account](#).*
- A message appears that your account was successfully created. Click [Continue](#).
Use an Existing Account to Re-Apply

Overview

You can use an existing account from a previous cycle to re-apply in the current cycle. You also keep the same CAS ID number from the previous cycle. To avoid processing delays and difficulties, do not create a new account. Duplicate accounts and any documents associated with those accounts are deleted.

- Log in to the application. A welcome screen appears; confirm you want to begin the re-application process by clicking Start Reapplication.
- Ensure your profile information, including your contact information, is correct.
- Decide if you want to copy application data. Your selection cannot be changed.

If You Choose to Start a Fresh Application

- The data from your previous application cycle is wiped clean and you proceed with a blank application. You will receive a new CAS ID number if you create a new account.
Use an Existing Account to Re-Apply

- If You Choose to Copy Application Data
- Information such as coursework, official test scores, attached transcripts, etc. can be copied into the new application. Letters of evaluation, essays, payments, and program-specific information cannot be copied into the new application.
  - Select the information you want to carry over. Unselected items will not carry over and cannot be recovered, so ensure your selections are complete before clicking Save and Continue.
  - A notification alerts you that every section of the application for which you choose to copy application data will require your review. You will need to review each application section to confirm the data is accurate. Click Continue.
  - A second notification provides instructions for accessing a PDF copy of your previous application. This PDF is only available if you submitted an application last cycle. Download the PDF before clicking Continue.
  - Your selected data will begin copying to your new application. This can take up to 24 hours to complete and you will receive an email once the application is ready.
- To successfully copy official test scores, the name and date of birth on your new application must match the name and date of birth on your original application. Note that it can take several days for the matching process to complete.
- If you have a difference in name and date of birth, contact customer service to have your scores manually copied into your application.
Use an Existing Account to Re-Apply

Downloading Last Cycle’s Application

A PDF of last cycle’s application is only available if you submitted that application to at least one program.

1. Click on your name in the upper right corner of the application, then select View Payment History.
2. Click View Order Details next to the payment.
3. Click Download PDF.

Updating Coursework

If you completed additional coursework since the last cycle:

1. Update the Colleges Attended section to include changes to dates, degree statuses, and schools.
2. Update your coursework. Coursework that was verified in the previous cycle will be locked in the current cycle; however, you can add, edit, and deleted unverified courses, including those listed as planned/in-progress.
3. Request updated transcripts for new coursework or new awarded degrees (this include degrees that were listed as "expected" last cycle and have now been updated to "awarded"). These transcripts are required and should be requested after you finish updating your coursework.

Verifying New Coursework

Once your application is completed, it is placed in queue for verification. Although there may be less information on your application to be verified, the standard verification processing timelines still apply.
Selecting OptomCAS Programs

Before Selecting a Program

Check the program's deadline requirements. Ensure you have enough time to apply. Determine if OptomCAS or your program requires evaluations, transcripts, or other supplementary materials - if so, these must be received prior to the deadline for your application to be considered complete. Once your application is complete, it takes on average two weeks to be verified.

Confirm your eligibility. Research the program and determine if you are eligible to apply. Contact the program directly if you have any questions regarding your eligibility. We do not verify prerequisites and requirements so it is your responsibility to ensure you are eligible.

Confirm that the program still has seats available. Some programs fill their classes prior to their posted deadline, even if they do not specifically state they offer rolling admissions. We strongly encourage you to contact your programs and ensure seats are still available before submitting your application. We cannot offer refunds if a school you selected has already filled its class, nor can we transfer the payment to another program.
Selecting OptomCAS Programs

- Once you have created an account, you must select at least one optometry school or college to which you will be applying.

- It is best to add all programs you are applying to at this point. You can always add more programs later on, or remove a program prior to submission of the application if you opt not to apply to this program. Once you have added one or more programs to which you are applying, you will need to review the list of designations schools and colleges, and then advance to the application.

Selecting a Program

1. Click Add Program at the top of the application home page.
2. Use the filters to locate the programs you are interested in applying to.
3. Click the plus sign next to a program to add it to your program list. You must select at least one program to continue completing the application. If you want to remove a program and only have one selected, you need to add the second program before you can remove the first one.
4. Continue adding programs as desired.
5. Begin filling out the application. Before submitting, be sure to review your program list to make sure you are applying to all your intended programs.

Note that by submitting your application, you are committing to applying to your selected programs. You cannot substitute or remove submitted programs after submissions. Additionally, we do not offer refunds for selections made in error and we do not transfer payments to another program.
Deleting OptomCAS Programs

- You can remove a program(s) at any time prior to submitting the application; however, any information entered in the Program Materials section will be lost and cannot be retrieved or transferred. Information in the Personal Information, Academic History, and Supporting Information sections will be retained for any programs to which you choose to submit.

- Once you submit your applications, you cannot remove any programs. To withdraw yourself from consideration for admission to a program, contact the program directly. Note, however, that OptomCAS does not offer applicant refunds for any reason.

- Note that your application must always have at least one program selected. If you want to change or remove a program prior to submission, be sure to select a new program first.

  - From the Add Program Page
    1. Click Add Program at the top of the page.
    2. Click the Undo button to the right of the program name.
    3. Click Yes, Delete this Program to confirm.

  - From the Submit Application Page
    1. Click Submit Application at the top of the page.
    2. Click the trash can icon next to the program you want to remove.
    3. Click Yes, Delete this Program.
School Selection

APPLICATION FEES
- 1 school: $175
- Each additional school: $70

Average applicant applies to 5-7 schools
- 7 schools: $595.00 (Under the Submit Application tab you can see the total cost before you confirm your application)

APPLY EARLY!
- Since optometry school acceptance is done on a ROLLING BASIS, applicants who submit early are more successful in being invited to interviews and considered for scholarships first. Please note that there are exceptions. For example, UC Berkeley is not based on rolling admissions. They expect all applications to be submitted by a certain date.
- Once your application becomes complete (application submitted and all official transcripts received) it can take 4 - 6 business weeks for your application to be verified.
Personal Information Section

- This section includes:
  - Release Statement
  - Biographic Information
  - Contact Information
  - Citizenship Information
  - Race & Ethnicity
  - Other Information.

- Proofread your application for accuracy and grammatical errors.
Biographic Information

- **Your Name**
  - This section pulls in information you entered when you created your account. Confirm that what appears here is correct; click the My Profile link to make changes.

- **Alternate Name**
  - If you are sending any documentation or test scores in which your name is listed differently than it appears on your application, select Yes in this section and enter the alternate information. This ensures that your documents and test scores are matched to your application. Contact customer service so they can manually match these items to your application; failure to do so could cause significant delays.
  - Examples of alternate names include:
    - Maiden names
    - Nicknames (e.g., “Bob” for Robert, “Beth” for Elizabeth, etc.)
    - “Westernized” names
    - Alternate punctuation (e.g., your name appears with/without a hyphen or apostrophe)
    - Alternate spacing (e.g., your name appears with or without specific spaces)
    - Known misspellings (if a document contains a misspelling)

- **Gender**
  - Select the appropriate option.

- **Birth Information**
  - Enter your date of birth in MM/DD/YYYY format. For example, January 7, 1989, would be listed as 01/07/1989. Then, enter your country, city, state/territory/province, and county of birth.
  - Make sure you enter your date of birth correctly; failure to do so could cause significant delays with matching documentation and test scores.
Contact Information

- **Current Address**
  - Enter the address where you want to receive mail correspondence. Be sure to keep this section up-to-date as you complete and submit your application. If you anticipate a change of address, enter the date through which your current address is valid.
  - Note: to ensure applicants are entering consistent data for some questions, this application uses pre-populated answer options that are maintained by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). For example, country answer options are derived from ISO 3166, which is the international standard for country codes and codes for their subdivisions.

- **Permanent Address**
  - If your current address is different from your permanent address, select No under Is this your permanent address? Then, enter the address that you consider to be your permanent and/or legal residence.
  - Note: to ensure applicants are entering consistent data for some questions, this application uses pre-populated answer options that are maintained by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). For example, country answer options are derived from ISO 3166, which is the international standard for country codes and codes for their subdivisions.

- **Phone Number**
  - Your phone number pulls in from the information entered when you created your account. Verify that the listed phone number and type are correct; click the Profile Section link to make changes.

- **Email**
  - Your email address pulls in from the information entered when you created your account. Verify that what appears here is correct; click the Profile Section link to make changes.
Citizenship Information

- **United States Citizenship Details**
  - Select your US citizenship status and country of citizenship, if applicable. If you have dual citizenship, indicate your second country of citizenship.
  - When selecting your status, consider the following definitions which are adapted from the US State Department:
    - **US Citizen**: an individual who was born in the US or attained citizenship through naturalization.
    - **Permanent US Resident**: an individual who holds a Green Card and is permitted to permanently live and work in the US.
    - **Temporary US Resident**: an individual who is an alien - a nonimmigrant foreign national - who is approved to temporarily live in the US for a specific purpose (e.g., as a student), has a permanent residence abroad, and does not hold a Green Card.
    - **Non-resident**: an individual who is a nonimmigrant foreign national and who is permitted to travel in the US for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less.
    - **None**: an individual who has no US citizenship or visa (immigrant or nonimmigrant) status.

- **Residency Information**
  - Select the US state and county in which you currently claim residency. Indicate how many years you have been a legal resident of that state and the US.
Citizenship Information

- **Visa Information**
  - If you currently have a US Visa, select **Yes** and enter all visa information. Please note that we cannot advise you on your visa status or any related details.
  - When selecting your visa type, consider the following definitions which are adapted from the US State Department. Note that this list is not all-inclusive. Refer to the [US State Department](https://travel.state.gov) for more information.
    - **B-1 Visitor**: an individual who wants to enter the US temporarily for business.
    - **F-1 Student**: an individual who wants to study at a US academic institution. This is the most common student visa type.
    - **H1-B Employee**: an individual who wants to work in the US in a specialty occupation.
    - **J-1 Student**: an individual who wants to study at a US academic institution. This is generally used for students in educational exchange programs (e.g., Fulbright Program).
    - **J-1 Teacher, Researcher, or Trainee**: an individual who wants to teach at a US primary or secondary school, research at a US institution, or train in an occupational field at a US business.
    - **Refugee**: an individual who is located outside of the US, is of special humanitarian concern to the US, demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, is not firmly resettled in another country, and is admissible to the US.
    - **Visa Waiver WB**: an individual from a Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating country that allows travel to the US for business stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa.
    - **Visa Waiver WT**: an individual from a Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating country that allows travel to the US for tourism stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa.
    - **Other**: an individual who has received a visa type not listed. Note that this list is not all-inclusive and more visa types may be available in the application.
Programs fully recognize the importance of diversity in their student body and in the workforce. Accordingly, programs strongly encourage applications from persons from all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious, and educational backgrounds and persons from groups underrepresented in the profession. Please select any and all of the options in this section which you feel best apply to you. Please note that this section is used for statistical purposes only and in no way affects your application or financial aid eligibility.

**Ethnicity**

- Indicate whether you consider yourself to be of Hispanic or Latino origin. This question is optional.

**Race**

- Select one or more of the groups of which you consider yourself to be a member. This question is optional.
Other Information

- **Military Status**
  - If you have US military experience, select your anticipated status at the time of enrollment from the drop-down. Select **Not a member of the military** if this does not apply.

- **Felony and Misdemeanor Convictions**
  - Indicate whether you’ve ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony. Note that most programs require satisfactory background check results as a condition of acceptance. Failure to disclose and provide accurate information about prior convictions may have serious consequences, such as annulment of acceptance offers, program dismissal, or other sanctions.
  - Background checks reflect all prior convictions, guilty pleas, city ordinance citations (such as public intoxication), illegal possession(s) including possession of alcohol under the legal age, payments of fines (including traffic violations), and, in some cases, prior records thought to have been expunged. Note that in some states, common traffic violations may be considered misdemeanors.
  - Candidates with criminal records due to felony offenses are encouraged to be aware of the potential impact for program acceptance and future licensure. Contact the programs you wish to apply to and state licensing agencies where you hope to practice for advice if you have a felony conviction or a criminal record. If you are uncertain of the status of a charge versus a conviction on your record, or if you are uncertain as to whether your offense was an infraction, misdemeanor, or a felony, contact the city, county, or state jurisdiction where the incident occurred.
  - If you are convicted of a misdemeanor or felony prior to admission and/or matriculation, it is your responsibility to immediately inform your program(s).
Other Information

- **Academic Infraction**
  - Indicate whether you have ever been disciplined or placed on academic probation while attending an academic institution. If yes, enter an explanation in the spaces provided.

- **License Infraction**
  - Indicate whether you have ever had any certification, registration, license, or clinical privileges revoked, suspended, or in any way restricted by an institution, state, or locality. If yes, enter an explanation in the spaces provided.

- **Previous Attendance at a Medical School or Health Profession Program**
  - Indicate whether you previously attended a medical school or health profession program anywhere in the world, regardless of completion. If you select Yes, enter details about the program.

- **Period of Non-Enrollment and Unemployment**
  - Indicate if you have been out of school and unemployed for a period of time greater than six months. If you select Yes, enter the dates and an explanation as to what caused this period of non-enrollment and unemployment.

- **Additional Questions**
  - Select your answers to any additional questions. Answering these questions helps programs gather information to develop future recruitment strategies.
Colleges Attended - Academic History

- **Requirements**
  - Report all institutions attended regardless of their relevance to the programs you are applying to or if you already attended another optometry school. Failure to report an institution may cause your application to be undelivered. This can significantly delay the processing of your application. Report all institutions attended, including but not limited to:
    - courses taken in high school for college or university credit
    - summer courses
    - community college courses
    - US military academies (note that this does not include courses on SMART or JST transcripts)
    - post-baccalaureate, graduate, and doctoral work
    - study abroad, Canadian, and foreign work, etc.
  - **List all institutions on your application** even if the coursework completed there was transferred to another institution.
  - **Report each institution only once**, regardless of the number of degrees earned or gaps in the dates of attendance.
  - **Send official transcripts** for each institution.
Adding a College or University

1. Click **Add a College or University**.

2. Type and select your college or university. It may take several tries to find your school, especially if it shares its name with others or could be spelled differently. For example, if you attended "Saint John's University," you may need to try "Saint John," "St. John," or "St John" (no period) to bring the school up on the list. If you exhausted all options and it does not appear, select **Can't find your school?**

3. Select if you obtained (or plan to obtain) a degree from the selected institution.
   1. If you earned or plan to earn a degree, provide details about the earned or expected degree.
   2. Click **Add another Degree** to add additional degrees, as needed.

4. Select your college's or university's term system. You can usually find this on the back of your official transcripts, or you can contact your college's registrar.
   1. Term system refers to the type of hours your credits are worth, not the length of the term or how many terms a year your college or university offered.
   2. If your transcript lists some courses as quarter and others as semester, enter the term type that is most common (i.e., if you have six quarter terms and two semester terms, enter quarter).

5. Enter dates of the first and last terms you attended. Be sure to only enter each college or university you attended once, regardless of gaps in your attendance there.

6. Click **Save This College or University** to complete the entry.
Transcript Process

Transcript verification can take six weeks, so make submitting transcripts your FIRST priority upon creating an account. For each college or university entered, click the Download Transcript Request Form button to download and print a transcript matching form. Provide this form to the college's or university's Registrar's Office so that they can send an official transcript to OptomCAS. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more information (and for information on sending electronic transcripts).

Note that if you attended a foreign college or university - and depending on your program’s requirements - you may be required to send a foreign evaluation. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more information.
Transcript Process

- **ELECTRONIC TRANSCRIPTS:** OptomCAS only accepts electronic Transcripts through Credential Solutions and Parchment.
  - **Credential Solutions:** To determine if your college or university participates in this service, please click the Credential Solutions [directory](#).
  - **Parchment:** To determine if your college or university participates in this service, please click the [Parchment website](#).
  - If your institution is not listed in the Credential Solutions Directory or the Parchment Directory, arrange for the registrar to mail an official transcript directly to OptomCAS using the OptomCAS Transcript Request Form.
  - All transcripts MUST be sent to OptomCAS for each school you have attended (even dual enrollment). Only original, official transcripts will be accepted. The application cannot be processed without official transcripts sent directly to OptomCAS. If you are mailing your transcript, please mail it to the address below:

  - OptomCAS Transcript Processing Center
    - P.O. Box 9119
    - Watertown, MA 02471
Transcript Process

- Sending Transcripts

- For each college or university entered, click the Download Transcript Request Form button to download and print a transcript matching form. Provide this form to the college's or university's Registrar's Office so that they can send an official transcript to OptomCAS. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more information (and for information on sending electronic transcripts).

- Note that if you attended a foreign college or university - and depending on your program's requirements - you may be required to send a foreign evaluation. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more information. Click DOWNLOAD TRANSCRIPT REQUEST FORM: Generate a request form for each institution and provide it to the university Registrar’s Office to submit with the official transcript.
In Athena choose the Student tab and click on Student Records, then choose Request Official Transcripts. It will redirect you to the My UGA Portal where you will need to log in with your student ID and password. Once you have done so, choose the Parchment Icon. Once you click on the Parchment icon it will direct you to another page. Type in OptomCAS under institution and follow the instructions. Remember DO NOT send your transcripts before the application opens.
UGA Transcript Process

- Read the directions carefully and double check that the destination is correct.
- Under Order Options you will choose “Graduate/Professional,” under Purpose of Transcript.
- Under the Attachment section, you will upload your transcript matching form before processing your order. If you are requesting a transcript from another institution you will need to ask them how they would like to receive your transcript matching form.
- Please Note: If you are not able to attach your Transcript Matching Form you will not be able to continue and you will be asked to enter the barcode manually. Once you enter the barcode you can then proceed to check out in order to complete your order. You must enter the barcode in the exact format it is listed on the Transcript Matching Form.
- Example: 9335870187-1599229-X
Transcript Process

- Three things to ensure you successfully match your transcript to your application:
  1. List the institution in the Colleges Attended section.
  2. Make sure you download the Transcript Request form for each institution.
  3. Request ALL transcripts the moment the application opens.

NOTE: Please list any alternate names used such as nickname, maiden name, or name variance in the Alternate Name field under the Biographic section of the application.

- It is your responsibility to monitor your application for transcript receipt.
  - OptomCAS will NOT notify applicants concerning missing transcripts.
  - If it has been longer than 10 business days since the transcript was mailed and it has not been posted—resubmit. The status of all transcripts can be viewed in the CHECK STATUS tab.
Transcript FAQ

- **Can I print one transcript request form and send it to all the colleges I attended?**
  - No. Each institution attended has a unique transcript matching form created specifically for that institution.

- **If I have attended multiple institutions, do I need to send a transcript from each school?**
  - Yes. All applicants are required to send ONE transcript from each institution attended regardless of the number of courses taken.

- **I have transfer credits that appear on my primary transcript. Do I still have to send a transcript from the transferring institution?**
  - Yes. OptomCAS requires an official transcript from every institution attended.

- **What should I do if my transcript(s) are not received by OptomCAS?**
  - If it has been longer than 10 business days since the transcript was mailed and it has not been posted—resubmit. The status of all transcripts can be viewed in the CHECK STATUS tab.

- [U.S. and Canadian Official Transcripts FAQs](#)
Transcript Entry

Requirements

• Reporting coursework accurately is your responsibility. Since credit values, grade values, and course subjects vary widely from school to school, your programs need some type of standardization so they can accurately compare applicants. This standardization is achieved by using your coursework to create a standard set of GPAs, ensuring you are compared to other applicants fairly and equally.

• Complete the Colleges Attended section before entering your courses.

• Report all courses on your transcripts, not just prerequisites. Be sure to include courses from which you withdrew, repeated courses, ungraded labs, test credits, gym courses, orientations, or other non-graded courses.

• Use official copies of your transcripts. Coursework must exactly match your official transcripts; don’t use an unofficial version, like a printout from your school’s website. List your courses under the correct term, year, and class level. Department prefixes and course numbers must precisely match those on your transcripts.

• Enter courses under the institution where you originally took the course, exactly as they appear on the original school’s transcript. Don’t list courses under the school in which the credits were transferred. You may need to go back to your Colleges Attended and add a school to enter the transfer credits for.

Note that if you don’t want to enter all your coursework yourself, our specialists can enter it for you for an additional fee. See the Professional Transcript Entry Service (PTE) topic for more information.
Coursework Entry Step-by-step

- Obtain an unofficial transcript for each college-level institution you have attended. Use the transcript and the UGA Bulletin to complete this section.
- Complete the “Colleges Attended” section.
- Click here for a video walkthrough of the transcript entry process.

Entering Coursework:

Enter a Term
1. Click Start to begin entering courses for a college or university.
2. Add a semester, quarter, or trimester depending on the term system you selected in the Colleges Attended section.
3. Select a term.
4. Select a year. Options are based on the time spans you selected in the Colleges Attended section.
5. Select an academic status. Academic status refers to your status during the term you are inputting, not your current status. Refer to the list of Academic Status definitions below for more information. If you're entering courses for a term that is currently in progress or planned, select In Progress/Planned.
6. Click Save All.
7. Continue adding terms, as needed.
Coursework Entry Step-by-step

- **Academic Status Definitions**
  - **Freshman-Senior:** Applies to all college- or university-level courses taken prior to your first bachelor's degree. In general, four-year students should list one year per designation and five-year students should list their last two years as senior. Non-traditional students should label their terms as evenly as possible in chronological order.
  - **Post-Baccalaureate:** Applies to undergraduate level courses taken after your first bachelor's degree is earned. If you earned a second bachelor's degree, that is considered post-baccalaureate.
  - **Graduate:** Applies to master's degree- and doctorate degree-level work only, regardless of whether the degree was earned. Work such as that taken in pursuit of a Ph.D, MD, PharmD, JD, JurisD, LL.D, DC., etc. are considered doctorate degree-level.
Coursework Entry Step-by-step

Enter a Course

Enter Courses for a Completed Term
1. Click Add A Course under the appropriate term.
2. Enter the course code. Department prefixes and course numbers must exactly match what appears on your official transcript.
3. Enter the course title. You can abbreviate it if it does not fit in the text box.
4. Select the course subject. If you're unsure, make your best guess; our team will help you if it doesn't match.
5. Enter the course credits exactly as they appear on your transcript. See the Course Credits section below for more details.
6. Enter the grade exactly as it appears on your transcript, including any pluses or minuses.
   1. If your grades are listed as “BA,” “CB,” or “DC,” you must list them as “AB,” “BC,” and “CD” in order for the system to recognize them.
   2. If your grades are listed as numbers (e.g., 93), enter them exactly as they appear on your transcript. They will automatically convert to the equivalent CAS letter grade.
7. The CAS Grade populates automatically. This allows us to standardize your coursework for all programs and cannot be edited.
8. Click Save All.
9. Continue adding courses, as needed.
Coursework Entry Step-by-step

- Enter Courses for an In-Progress or Planned Term
  - You should enter any courses that you are currently taking or plan to take in the near future. This is not required, but is strongly recommended, as some programs require it. Note, however, that any term containing In Progress/Planned courses cannot be marked as complete; the entire term must be marked as In Progress/Planned. Contact your programs to determine if they require planned or in-progress coursework to be listed. Once you complete in-progress courses, you can update them in the application.

1. Make sure that you selected In Progress/Planned for the term you're listing the course under. This alerts the system that you aren't required to enter a grade for this course.
2. Enter the course code.
3. Enter the course title. You can abbreviate it if it does not fit in the text box.
4. Select the course subject. If you're unsure, make your best guess.
5. Enter the expected course credits. Depending on the format of your credits, you may need to convert them. See the Course Credits section below for more details.
6. Click Save All.
7. Continue adding courses, as needed.
Example Of Coursework

You will enter all of your courses each semester as it is designated on your transcript.

DO NOT rush through this section as you will need to select the courses you have entered for later sections.

Click here for more information on adding coursework.

Click here for a video walkthrough of the transcript entry process.

ADVISOR TIP:
1. For your FYOS class you will want to enter “special topics” for the subject drop down menu.
2. When entering your AP credit you want to list it exactly as it appears on your transcript in the semester and year it appears.
   Instead of listing the letter “K” for the grade, you will want to list “CR” which means Credits Received.
Coursework Entry Cont.

- **Course Credits**

- **Semester, Trimester, and Quarter Credits**
  - If your course credits are mostly in “3.0,” “4.0,” or “5.0” format, then your transcript is listing normal semester, trimester, or quarter credits and no conversion is necessary. Enter the credits exactly as they appear on your transcript.

- **Unit Credits**
  - If all of your course credits are listed in “1.0” or “0.50” format, then your transcript is listing credit units and you need to perform a conversion. Check the back of your transcript for a conversion ratio, which will say something like "1 unit is equivalent to 4 semester hours."
  - If there is no conversion on the back of your transcript, contact your registrar’s office to determine the conversion ratio. Then, convert the credits by multiplying the number of units listed on your transcript by the conversion factor. For example, if your conversion is 1 unit = 4 hours and your transcript lists 1 unit for a course, you would enter 4.00 credits on your application. If 0.50 is listed, you would enter 2.00.

- **Lab Credits**
  - If your transcript lists labs separately, you must list them as separate courses on your application as well. Record the labs exactly as they appear on your transcript. If your transcript combines lab and lecture courses into one course, list it as one course on your application.

- **Test Credits**
  - You can only list test credits if they were awarded by one of the schools you attended and they appear on your transcript. Test credit types include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB)
Enter Course Types (Transcript Review)

- Once you enter and save all your courses, click **Review & Finalize My Transcripts**. Your next step is to designate specific courses as study abroad, Advanced Placement, repeated, etc. You must complete Transcript Review before you can add prerequisites in the Program Materials section.

Primary College

- Identify your primary undergraduate institution. This is typically considered the college or university where you earned (or will earn) your first Bachelor’s Degree. If no degree is planned, select the college or university where you completed the majority of your undergraduate coursework.

Repeated Classes

- Indicate if you repeated any of your courses. Courses should only be marked as repeated if you repeated them at the same institution (i.e., you retook the course for a higher grade). Withdrawn courses, courses taken at different schools, and courses taken multiple times for new credit (i.e., school band, physical education, etc.) are not considered repeated.

- Courses marked as repeated are not included in your GPA calculation. Enter all initial attempts for repeated courses with "0.00" credits and record the grade received. For the final attempt of the repeated course, enter the full credit value and grade.

- If you repeated courses, select **Yes** and click **Continue**. Then, click the plus sign next to the repeated courses for each college or university you attended.
Transcript Review: AP Courses

- Advanced Placement Credit
  - Indicate if you received Advanced Placement (AP) credit on the College Board Advanced Placement Exams for any of your courses.
  - If you received AP credit, select Yes and click Continue. Then, click the plus sign next to the advanced placement courses. Be sure to only select courses that are clearly marked as AP on your transcript.
Transcript Review: Additional Tests

- Other Test Credit
  - Indicate if you received credit for tests other than the AP exam, including International Baccalaureate (IB), CLEP, DANTE, Regents, or Institutional/Departmental exams (i.e., courses you “tested out of” at college or university).
  - If you received test credits, select Yes and click Continue. Then, click the plus sign next to the courses. Be sure to only select courses that are clearly identified as test credits on your transcript.
Transcript Review: Honors Courses

- **Honors Courses**
  - Indicate if you took any honors courses, which are generally college or university courses taken at an honors level. These are usually designated with an “H” in the course number on your transcript. Note that earning Latin honors upon graduation does not mean your courses are retroactively considered “Honors.”
  - If you took honors courses, select Yes and click Continue. Then, click the plus sign next to the courses. Be sure to only select courses that are clearly identified as honors on your transcript.
Transcript Review: Study Abroad

- Study Abroad Courses
  - If you studied abroad, indicate the courses you took as part of your institution’s study abroad program. Refer to the Sending Transcripts section for more information.
  - If you studied abroad, select Yes and click Continue. Then, click the plus sign next to the courses.

- Did you take any courses while studying abroad?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Continue
Professional Transcript Entry

Overview

If you don’t want to enter all your coursework yourself, our Professional Transcript Entry Service (PTE) specialists can enter it for you for an additional fee. This service is only available for completed coursework from accredited schools. Coursework from not-listed schools, foreign coursework, and planned/in-progress courses are not eligible for PTE and must be entered by you.

Note that our PTE specialists only enter the information listed on your transcripts; they do not correct errors for coursework you have already entered. If you entered coursework and made a mistake or did not report an institution, these errors will be communicated to you during the verification process, at which point it is your responsibility to correct them.

Fees

Fees for PTE are as follows:

- 1-3 transcripts: $65
- 4-6 transcripts: $90
- 7 or more transcripts: $140

These fees apply only to coursework entry and are in addition to regular application fees. Fee waivers are not available for PTE.
Professional Transcript Entry

- **Process**
  - To successfully sign up for PTE, complete the following required steps:
    1. Enter any coursework that is not eligible for PTE: Before the PTE process can start, you must enter any coursework that is ineligible for PTE. Ineligible coursework includes planned or in-progress courses and courses taken at not-listed US schools. We cannot enter these courses on your behalf and they must be entered by you before you pay for PTE. Note that once you make your PTE payment, you will be unable to enter any additional planned/in-progress courses until the verification process is complete.
    2. Send us your transcripts.: We must receive all required transcripts before PTE can begin. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more details. Monitor your application to ensure your transcripts are received. On average, it takes up to seven business days from the date we receive your transcripts to post them to your application. Once your transcripts post, you will receive a confirmation email and you can view your transcript receipt dates on the Check Status tab.
    3. Sign up and pay for PTE: Click Tell Me More at the bottom of the Transcript Entry page and follow the prompts to sign up for PTE and enter your payment information. Payments are non-refundable and can only be made online via credit card. After making your payment, you can continue adding schools for PTE until you submit your application. You cannot add any additional schools for PTE once your application is submitted.
    4. Submit and complete your application: Before PTE, you must submit and pay for your application. Once your application is submitted and we receive your transcripts, we will begin work on your application within ten business days. Note that applications are placed in line for PTE on a first-come, first-served basis.

- **Turnaround Time**
  - Once all the requirements are met, it may take up to ten business days for transcript entry to be completed. Your application is not given a Complete Date and moved into the verification queue until your coursework entry is approved, at which point it can take up to an additional two weeks to be verified. Please keep these turnaround times and your program's deadline requirements in mind. We are not responsible for missed deadlines due to PTE procedures or turnaround times.

- **Reviewing and Approving Your Coursework Entry**
  - You'll receive a notification once your PTE is complete. You should then review the coursework entered by our staff to make sure it is accurate and approve the entry. You should also designate any required prerequisite courses in the Program Materials section before approving the entry.
  - If you find any issues with the coursework entry, email customer service to determine how to proceed. Wait for corrections to be confirmed and implemented before approving the coursework entry.
  - Once you approve your coursework entry, your application is given a Complete Date and placed in line for verification. Be sure to approve your coursework in a timely manner to avoid any delays in processing your application.
The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. All OptomCAS programs require the OAT.

You must request that ADA send your official OAT scores electronically to OptomCAS. Paper copies are not accepted.

After you request your scores, make sure that you also self-report your OAT score in the Standardized Tests section of the application. It takes approximately 10-12 business days from the date you make the request to post to your application. Make sure that the name and date of birth on your application match that on your OAT exam; otherwise, your scores will not automatically post to your account. If you believe there may be a discrepancy, wait until ADA processes your scores, then contact customer service so they can manually connect the scores to your application.

Note that when you select at least one US optometry school to receive your official OAT scores, you grant the Department of Testing Services permission to release your scores to all optometry programs to which you have applied through OptomCAS, even if you did not originally select those schools to view your scores. If your OAT application has no optometry schools selected, then you have not granted permission to the Department of Testing Services to release your official scores and your official scores will not be forwarded to OptomCAS. Only the schools you apply to through OptomCAS will receive your OAT scores once your OptomCAS application is complete.

Once your OAT scores are attached to your application, they cannot be removed should you decide you no longer want your programs to view them. Your OAT scores will also remain attached to your application if you re-apply. We recommend researching your programs to determine whether you want your OAT scores to be part of your application before you request them.

If you took the OAT exam prior to June 19, 2017 and want your scores submitted to OptomCAS, you must submit a request for an additional score report available at www.ada.org/en/oat. Additional fees apply.
Letters Of Evaluation

• **Before You Begin**
  • Evaluations (sometimes called Letters of Evaluation, Letters of Reference, or Letters of Recommendation) are submitted by the evaluators themselves; they cannot be completed or submitted by the applicant or another party on behalf of the evaluator. OptomCAS is not responsible for verifying evaluators’ identities. If a discrepancy is found, they reserve the right to contact the appropriate individuals to investigate and to share the discrepancy with all programs.

• **Before getting started, consider the following:**
  • **All evaluations must be submitted electronically** by evaluators using [Letters by Liaison](#), our Recommender Portal.
  • **Research each program’s requirements.** You should determine whether your programs have specific requirements regarding evaluator roles or relationships before listing evaluators on your application. Many programs have strict guidelines and completed evaluations cannot be removed or replaced.
  • **Prepare your evaluators.** Once you choose your evaluators, be sure to inform them about the process and that they will be completing the evaluation electronically. We recommend getting their preferred email address and asking that they monitor that inbox for your evaluation request (which will come from optomcasinfo@optomcas.org), including any junk or spam folders.

  ▪ It is **NOT** necessary to wait until your evaluators have uploaded a letter to submit your application.
Letters Of Evaluation

- **Resend the Evaluation Request**
  - If you need to resend a request:
    1. In the Evaluations section, locate the request you wish to resend.
    2. Click the pencil icon to edit the request.
    3. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click Resend this Evaluation Request.

- **Change the Evaluator’s Email Address**
  - If you entered an incorrect email address for any evaluators (or if any evaluator asks that you send the request to a different email address), you must delete these requests and then re-add them with the correct email.

- **Waiver**
  - The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) gives you the right to access evaluations unless you choose to waive your right of inspection and review. Prior to requesting any evaluations, you are required to indicate whether you wish to waive your rights. OptomCAS will release your decision to waive or not waive access to your evaluators and designated programs. Your waiver decision serves the same purpose as a legal signature and is binding.
  - Selecting Yes indicates to programs that your evaluator completed their evaluation with the understanding that you would not be able to view it. This means you will not be able to see the content of the evaluation. Programs may view this type of evaluation as a more accurate representation of an applicant’s qualifications.
  - Selecting No indicates to programs that your evaluator completed their evaluation with the understanding that you may choose to view it in the future. Selecting this option does not allow you to view your evaluation via the application. If you do not waive your right to view the evaluation, you may ask your evaluator for a copy of the evaluation. Programs may view this type of evaluation as a less accurate representation of an applicant’s qualifications.
  - Once you make a selection, you can’t change it, so consider the choices carefully.
Four Letters Of Evaluation

- If the evaluation has been sent, a **green** STATUS box appears under the Evaluator’s name.

- If the letter of recommendation has yet to be sent a **orange** STATUS box will appear.

- Make sure to check the evaluation requirements for the different schools because there also may be some slight variations between schools on how many recommendations they want from specific individuals.
Letters Of Evaluation

- When an applicant saves an evaluation request, the evaluator will receive an email request to complete the evaluation.
- The email will include a link to an online portal where the evaluator can upload a letter.
Letters Of Evaluation

- When an applicant saves an evaluation request, the evaluator will receive an email request to complete the evaluation.
- OptomCAS does not provide a prompt or set of characteristics to include in the letter.
  - Evaluators are encouraged to provide information about the applicant’s academic ability, character, time management skills, etc.
- Letters should be on letterhead and include a signature.
Letters Of Evaluation FAQ

- **What is an Electronic Letter of Evaluation?**
  - Evaluations are required to be completed electronically by your evaluators. An email request from OptomCAS will be sent to the individual evaluator within instructions.
  - There are three status notifications:
    - **Requested** - The email request has been sent to the Evaluator.
    - **Accepted** - Evaluator has logged onto the online Portal but has not submitted the evaluation.
    - **Completed** - Evaluator has completed the evaluation and has submitted it to OptomCAS.

- **Can I have different evaluations sent to individual programs?**
  - No. Each evaluation will be sent to all programs for which you are applying.

- **How can I select a different person as an evaluator than those I initially selected?**
  - If the status is still “Requested” or “Accepted,” you may delete that individual and add the new source. If the status is “Complete,” changes cannot be made.
Letters Of Evaluation FAQ

- What does it mean to waive my right to access the evaluation?
  - You relinquish your access to the provided letter. If you do not waive that right, the evaluator will know that you have access to read it. **ALWAYS** waive your right to access.

- How can I view my evaluations?
  - OptomCAS cannot allow you access to your evaluations, nor can applicants view their evaluations during the OptomCAS process. If you have not waived your right to access your evaluations, once you have matriculated to a school or college of optometry, you may be able to then review your letters at that time and at the discretion of the institution.

- Can I change my waiver to view my recommendation?
  - No. Once an evaluation has been received by OptomCAS, the waiver cannot be changed.

- Must I wait for my evaluations to be complete before submitting my application?
  - It is not necessary, nor is it suggested, to wait until your evaluators have responded to submit your application.
Experiences

Overview

In this section, you can enter your professional experiences in several categories, or types. Review the type definitions below, consider the duties you performed during the experience, and use your best judgment to determine which category your experience falls into. If you have any questions about your experiences fulfilling an individual program's requirements, inquire with that program directly.

Although you can enter any experiences that you believe are relevant to your application, we recommend focusing on those experiences within the last 10 years and at the collegiate level and above. Enter only current and in-progress experiences, and check your program's requirements regarding documentation.

Experience Types

Employment: All paid work done outside of the optometry field; for example, a retail or restaurant job.

Extracurricular Activities: Related activities you would like your selected programs to review; for example, non-optometric academic clubs and competitive teams. Do not include paid work experience in this section.

Optometric Experience: All paid and unpaid optometric work experience with the exception of shadowing/observation and volunteer experiences.

Shadowing: Time spent officially following and observing a health care professional at work, preferably in the optometry field.

Volunteer: All volunteer work; for example, working for Habitat for Humanity, tutoring students, participating in or working for a fundraiser walk or blood drive, etc.
**Enter Your Experience**

1. Click **Add an Experience**.
2. Select the appropriate experience type from the drop-down.
3. Enter information about the organization where the experience took place.
4. Enter information about your supervisor at the organization. This is a person that programs can contact to verify that this experience occurred. If the experience was a student-organized group and there was no advisor, list a member who can verify your experience.
5. Enter the date or date range in which the experience took place. Note that your experiences will not display on your application in any specific order, regardless of the dates entered.
6. Enter additional details about the experience, including the title of the experience and the time commitments. Enter the average weekly number of hours that you completed for this experience during the date range that you indicated.
7. Select **Yes** or **No** to indicate a release authorization to allow your selected programs to contact the organization.
8. Click **Save & Continue**.

**Note that you cannot repeat hours between Experience types. So, if position duties encompass more than one section, enter the position in both sections and divide the hours and duties accordingly.**
Experiences

Add Your Experiences

Update your experiences any time prior to submission. After submission, you can add more experiences. However, you cannot update or delete completed experiences. Refer to the Checklist on the program materials section of the application to determine if experiences are required for your program application.

Experience Dates
- Start Date
- Current Experience
- End Date
- Status

Experience Details
- Title
- Type of Recognition
  - Compensated
  - Received Academic Credit
  - Volunteer
- Average Weekly Hours
- Number of Weeks
- Total Hours
- Description/Key Responsibilities
- Release Authorization (May we contact this organization?)

Save & Continue
Achievements

Achievement Types

- Awards
  - Awards received as a prize, such as trophies and medals.

- Honors
  - Honors received as a special distinction for work done, including Dean's List and memberships in honor societies.

Add an Achievement

1. Click Add An Achievement.
2. Select the type of achievement.
3. Enter the name of the achievement.
4. Enter the name of the organization that presented the achievement, if applicable.
5. Enter the issued date.
6. Enter a brief description, especially if the achievement is not clear based on its title. You can also note if any special circumstances surrounded it. If your achievement was awarded multiple times (e.g., Dean's List), use this field to explain that instead of creating multiple instances.
7. Click Save This Achievement. Your saved achievements will not display in any particular order, regardless of the order or dates you enter.

Note that once you submit your application, you cannot edit or remove your achievements; however, you can continue to add new achievements, as needed.
Program Materials Section

Overview

The Program Materials section includes additional information and requirements for the programs you selected in the Add Programs section. Each program’s requirements may vary, so it’s important you review this section in detail.

Your selected programs appear on the left side of this page; click each program’s name to begin your review. Note that depending on your program’s requirements, you’ll see one or more of the tabs outlined below.

Home

The Home tab contains the Program Details provided by each program at the start of the application cycle. It includes deadlines and other information specific to the program. Be sure to review this page carefully for any additional instructions, information, and/or requirements.

Documents

The Documents tab is only available for certain programs. If applicable, you can upload documents that will only be visible to that particular program. Documents that do not have a red asterisk are optional and do not need to be completed for you to submit your application.

Contact the program directly if you have any questions about their specific requirements.

If your program provides a PDF form to fill out and upload in this section, you must save and upload it as an image. Depending on your computer’s operating system, there may be multiple ways to do this; a Google search can point you in the right direction.
Program Materials

- **Prerequisites**
  - The Prerequisites tab is only available for certain programs. In it, you can assign courses you took (or plan to take) to fulfill the program's required prerequisites. You must complete Transcript Entry and Transcript Review in order to complete this section.
  - Note that assigning these courses does not necessarily mean you meet the program's prerequisite requirements; the program wants you to self-identify these courses for their review. Contact each program directly if you have questions about these prerequisites.

- **Assign a Prerequisite**
  1. Click Assign Course.
  2. Click the plus sign next to the course(s) that you believe fulfill the prerequisite. You can match multiple courses to one prerequisite, if applicable.
  3. Click Save and Exit.

- **Questions**
  - The Questions tab is only available for certain programs. Here, you can answer questions specific to each program. Questions may be multiple choice or open-ended text boxes. Some programs require an additional essay. Contact each program directly if you have questions.
  - Select your answers for each question and then click Save My Responses. If copying a response into a text box, check for possible formatting changes. We suggest using simple formatting, as tabs, italics, multiple spaces, etc., will not be saved. To delineate paragraphs, type a double return between each paragraph.
Personal Statement

- 1 page; 4,500 characters including spaces

- Describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your preparation for training in this profession, your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest in optometry, and your future career goals.

- Traits to express: motivation, academic preparedness, articulate, socially conscious, and knowledgeable about optometry.

- Write about your experiences and any qualities that will make you stand out.

OptomCAS Essay

Please describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your preparation for training in this profession, your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest in optometry, and your future career goals. Your essay should be limited to 4500 characters.
Writing Your Personal Statement for Health Professional School

There is no one way to write a personal statement, but there are some best practices and core elements of personal statements. Use some of this information to start writing; consider attending a personal statement workshop or setting up an individual appointment with your Career Consultant to fine-tune your statement.

Structuring Your Statement
Organize your Personal Statement just like you would any other essay: introduction, body, conclusion. Each body paragraph should be structured using PEEEL:

P: Point - topic sentence - what is the point you want to make?
E: Evidence - make your point - what evidence supports your point?
E: Explanation - explain your point - why is this relevant to the program you are pursuing?
L: Link - link your point to the next paragraph.

4 Key Components of Your Statement
1. Motivation
   Why do you want to pursue this career? Think about your initial inspiration and your ongoing preparation.
2. Fit
   How do you know this is the right career for you? Think about the values and personal qualities you possess that make you a good fit for this career. Consider how they match the profession.
3. Capacity
   How do you know that you have what it takes to be successful in this field? Assess your skills, strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. Put them in context of this profession.
4. Vision
   How do you want to impact the profession? Consider broad and specific goals.

Do’s & Don’ts
DO: Tell a story, find an angle, be specific.
DO: Write well & proofread!
DO: Use a clean, professional format.
DO: Stay within the word/character limit.
DON’T: Speak in clichés or generalities.
DON’T: Praise, whine, condescend, or repeat info from your resume.
DON’T: Submit supplemental materials unless they are requested.

Top 10 Tips for Writing Success
1. Plan ahead - time and content. Give yourself more time than you think you need to write your document. Identify the main points you wish to include before you start writing.
2. Narrow your purpose. Be sure you understand the directions you were given, and choose a narrow focus. Each sentence and paragraph should support your purpose and consider your audience.
3. Start in the middle. Introductions and conclusions often prove to be challenging to write. Start in the middle and just begin writing.
4. Embrace terrible first drafts. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Just write, knowing that you may throw out drafts entirely or make significant revisions. Remember that writing is a process.
5. Use strong action verbs. Limit state of being verbs (“is,” “was,” “are,” “were”) to only two or three per paragraph. Instead, use strong action verbs to make your writing more interesting.
6. Write in active voice. Using active voice instead of passive voice makes your writing easier to read. For example, write “I used Adobe InDesign to create engaging and creative publications” instead of “Adobe InDesign was used to create engaging and creative publications.”
7. Streamline your words. Avoid clutter, ensuring that each word adds to your purpose. At times, fewer words lead to strong sentences. For instance, “There are many people who are affected by a fear of public speaking” could be improved by writing “Many people fear public speaking.”
8. Use variety of sentence structures and lengths. Using the same sentence structure and length over and over again leads to dull writing. Instead of writing “I went to the grocery store. I bought some delicious chocolate chip cookies.” Try “I went to the grocery store and bought some delicious chocolate chip cookies.”
9. Use transitional words and phrases. Transitions ensure that your sentences and paragraphs flow nicely for the reader. Simply repeating select words from one paragraph to the next serves as a useful transitional tool. Words like “additionally,” “however,” “therefore” and “consequently” can help with transitional flow as well.
10. Start and end strong. Capture your reader’s attention with an interesting opening that introduces your topic and supports your purpose of writing. A strong conclusion sums up your purpose and leaves the reader with a positive impression.

Reflective Writing Prompts
Use these prompts to practice writing personal content with details and structure.
1. If I could talk to my childhood self, the one thing I would say is...
2. What surprised you most about your life or life in general?
3. Write about a moment in your life you wish you could freeze and preserve.
4. Imagine living the day as someone else.
5. Write about a promise you want to make to yourself and keep.
6. I feel most energized when...

Adapted from the University of Minnesota "Personal Statements for a Health Program," 2017
Submitting and Completing Your OptomCAS Application

Before Submitting

Before you submit your application, be aware of the following:

• **You can make limited changes after you submit your application.** You can add new test scores, experiences, achievements, and/or certifications (where applicable), but you cannot edit existing entries. You can also update evaluations with "new" or "in-progress" statuses and select additional programs to apply to. All other sections are read-only.

• **You can submit your application before your transcripts and evaluations are received.** Please note, however, that we will not review your application until all of your transcripts, payments, and evaluations are received.

• **Do not wait until the last minute.** You can submit your application up until 11:59 PM ET on the deadline date; however, ensure you allow for time to complete the required payment section. You must click **Submit** and complete the final payment information before the deadline in order to guarantee your submission is accepted. Additionally, be aware that during our busiest times you may experience page loading delays, and these may occur outside of customer service’s hours of operation. We cannot grant deadline extensions if you miss your deadline; contact your programs directly for more information.

• All applicants are encouraged to submit the application well in advance of posted deadline dates as optometry schools **admit students on a rolling basis.**
Submitting Your Payment

- When you are ready to submit your application, go to the Submit Application tab and click Submit. Payments can only be made in the application via a credit card. We accept Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover. Credit card payments cannot be made over the phone.

- Once you submit your application and payment, click View Payment History for each program on the Check Status page to confirm your payment's receipt.

Refund Policy

- Because your designated programs have access to your information as soon as you submit your application, no refunds can be issued for any reason (this includes missed deadlines and programs no longer accepting applicants).

- Before submitting your application, you are prompted to review and agree to the OptomCAS Release Statement. This agreement includes a clause about the refund policy. As an applicant, it's your responsibility to complete your application correctly, monitor the status of your application, ensure all required materials are received and posted to the application, respond to all notifications in a timely manner, and adhere to the deadline requirements posted by each program to which you have applied.

After Submitting

- You’ll receive a confirmation email acknowledging that your application was submitted. Note that submitting does not mean your application is being reviewed by your programs. Depending on what materials were already received, submitting changes your application status from “In-Progress” to “Received” or “Complete.”
Completing Your OptomCAS Application

Your application must be considered "complete" to be placed in line for verification. In general, an application is complete when:

- All official transcripts have been received and posted to your application.
- All required evaluations have been completed and submitted to OptomCAS.
- Your application fee payment was submitted and marked as received.
- You submitted your application and received an email confirming it was successfully submitted.
- Your application Program Status is "Complete."

Note that your selected programs may have specific requirements for completion (i.e., supplemental applications, official transcripts, document uploads, etc.). We recommend contacting your programs directly to ensure you are meeting all requirements. Failure to submit all required materials may jeopardize your eligibility for admission consideration. Review each program's homepage to ensure you are meeting all requirements.
How OptomCAS Programs Receive Your Application

- **When Programs Review Your Application**
  - Once you pay for and submit your application, you'll receive a confirmation email and we'll send your application electronically to your programs. Your programs choose when to review your application. Once your application is verified, contact the programs directly with any questions about your application's status.

- **Why Programs Don't Receive Your Application**
  - Programs don't receive your application when the following occurs:
    - You did not submit your application to the program.
    - You did not submit payment.
    - Your application has an Undelivered status.
    - Your application has been placed on hold. Applications are placed on hold when:
      - You have created more than one application account for the cycle, and the duplicates are placed on hold.
      - You have chosen to withdraw your application for the cycle.
      - Your application has been suspended as a result of a code of conduct or ethics violation.
      - A credit card payment was charged back.
  - If your application is on hold, contact your program(s) for more information.
Updating Your OptomCAS Application/Academic Update

Overview

Once you submit your application, most sections are locked to prevent edits. Updates you can make include:

- Editing your contact information.
- Editing your profile information (username, password, security question, etc.).
- Adding programs with deadlines that have not yet passed.
- Editing or deleting evaluations that remain incomplete.
- Adding new test scores, experiences, achievements, and/or certifications, if applicable (you are unable to edit or delete existing entries).
- Editing program materials for programs you have not yet submitted to (programs you have already submitted to will be locked).
- If you have updates for other sections of your application, submit these updates directly to your programs.

Updating Your Coursework

After your application is verified, you can make updates to courses you listed as in progress or planned, as well as add courses that are planned for the next term. You cannot update terms that are already verified or add terms from previous years (e.g., you forgot to add a term from 2014). If you are updating coursework as a re-applicant, review Use an Existing OptomCAS Account to Re-apply.

To update your coursework:

1. Ensure your application’s status is Verified.
2. Navigate to the Academic History section.
3. Click Transcript Entry.
4. Click Edit under the school you are updating.
5. Click the blue pencil next to the term you are updating (if you need to add a new term, click Add Term).
6. Change the In Progress/Planned box to Completed.
7. Update your courses, credits, and grades.
8. Click Save All.
9. Click Update my application to send the updated information to your programs.
Updating Your OptomCAS Application/Academic Update

- Additional Information
  - Timeframe for Updating Coursework
    - Your application status must be Verified before you can update your coursework.
    - When you submit an update, you must move the entire term from in-progress to complete.
  - Transcript Requirements
    - Updated coursework will be verified. Arrange for your updated official transcripts to be sent directly to OptomCAS as soon as they are available.
- Updating Your GPA
  - Since updated coursework is verified, new grades will be factored into your existing OptomCAS GPAs and made available to your programs.
You can download and view your application in PDF format. From the application dashboard:

- Navigate to the **Check Status** tab and click the download button next to a program, or
- Navigate to the **Submit Application** tab and click the download button next to a program.

Once you download the application PDF, you can print it or save it on your computer.
What is Verification?

Definition

Verification is the process used to ensure all of your coursework was entered correctly and consistently. Since credit values, grade values, and course subjects vary widely from school to school, your programs need some type of standardization so they can accurately compare applicants. This standardization is achieved by using your coursework to create a standard set of GPAs, ensuring you are compared to other applicants fairly and equally.

Several things happen during verification:

- Each course you entered in the Transcript Entry section gets placed under a specific course subject category.
- Each grade you entered in the Transcript Entry section gets converted to an OptomCAS grade value.
- GPAs are calculated using the converted grade values.

If significant mistakes are found in your application during the verification process, your application will be undelivered, or returned to you for corrections.

Timeline

Once all of your required application materials are received, your application's status changes to Complete and your application is placed in line to be verified. Verifications occur in chronological order and on average take two weeks to complete. Once your application is verified, you will receive a notification and your application's status will change to Verified.
Correcting an Undelivered Application

Undelivery
- If significant mistakes are found in your application during the verification process, your application will be "undelivered," or returned to you for corrections. When an application is undelivered, you receive a notification detailing the corrections that must be made before we can continue processing it.

Transcript Entry Mistakes that Cause an Application to be Undelivered
- Failure to report a college or university you received credit from.
- All courses were listed under one semester or term instead of divided up by term.
- Missing or incorrect department prefixes.
- Missing or incorrect course numbers.
- Missing courses (usually non-credit labs, PE courses, withdrawn courses, test credits, or repeated courses).
- Vague or incorrect course titles (i.e., "English" instead of "English Composition I").
- Unconverted course credits in a unit system.
- Mislabeled terms or terms entered out of chronological order.
- Information that consistently does not match your official transcripts.

Transcript Entry Mistakes that Do Not Cause an Application to be Undelivered
- Misspellings
- Capitalization
- Incorrect course subjects
- Occasional (not more than 4) incorrect grade, credit, or course information entries
Correcting an Undelivered Application

Correct and Redeliver Your Application

Your application's status must be Complete in order for us to resume processing.

1. Thoroughly review your undelivery notification to determine what corrections need to be made. If you aren’t sure how to proceed, contact customer service.
2. Correct each mistake. Take appropriate actions if any additional documents are required (i.e., new transcripts).
3. Once all mistakes are corrected, you must "redeliver," or resubmit your application so we can continue processing it. You do not need to make any additional payments. To redeliver, click the Check Status tab at the top of your application.
4. Click Redeliver Programs to resubmit.
5. Once your application's status returns to Complete, we will resume verification (typically within five business days). If it has been more than five business days since you redelivered your application, contact customer service.

How Undelivery Affects Your Application Timeline

On average it takes two weeks for applications to be verified, and you will not be alerted to errors before that point. Because undelivery adds time to the verification process, it can delay your application. It is best to complete your application accurately the first time to avoid undelivery; however, if your application is undelivered, make corrections and resubmit as soon as possible to avoid any further delays.

Redelivery of your application does not change your submission date, but it does affect the date your application is considered complete. Contact your programs to determine any effects this may have on your application.

If you notice errors in your application before verification, contact customer service to undeliver your application so you can correct it. This will delay your application, but verification will resume sooner than if you waited for the errors to be found during the verification process.
Finding Your OptomCAS GPA Calculations

Find Your GPA Calculations

You can view your OptomCAS GPAs once your application has been verified. To view your OptomCAS GPAs:

1. From the application dashboard, navigate to the Submit Application tab.
2. Click the download button located next to any program you applied to.
3. Open the PDF and use the bookmarks to navigate to the Calculated GPA section.

Discrepancies

Because of the standardization that occurs during verification, it is not uncommon to see GPA discrepancies between what your schools calculate and what OptomCAS calculates. Discrepancies occur because:

- OptomCAS does not recognize an individual school’s policies for forgiveness, academic renewal, or grade replacement for repeated courses. Only final attempts of repeated courses are factored into your OptomCAS GPA.
- OptomCAS’s numeric grade values differ from an individual school’s.
- OptomCAS calculates all GPAs in semester hours. Courses that were completed in quarter hours are converted to semester hours. The conversion ratio is 1.0 quarter hour = 0.667 semester hours.
- OptomCAS breaks down your GPA by academic year, not by college or university. Coursework completed at multiple schools for similar academic years get combined. For example, if you completed freshman coursework at College ABC and freshman coursework at College XYZ, OptomCAS uses all of that coursework to calculate the GPA for your freshman academic year.
GOOD LUCK!