The 2022-2023 OptomCAS application cycle opens **June 29, 2023**.

- [Directory of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#)
- [Deadlines, Fees, Other Tests Accepted, etc.](#)
- [Prerequisites](#)
- [ASCO's YouTube Channel](#)

Do Your Own Research

- This presentation is meant to serve as a resource during this application cycle.
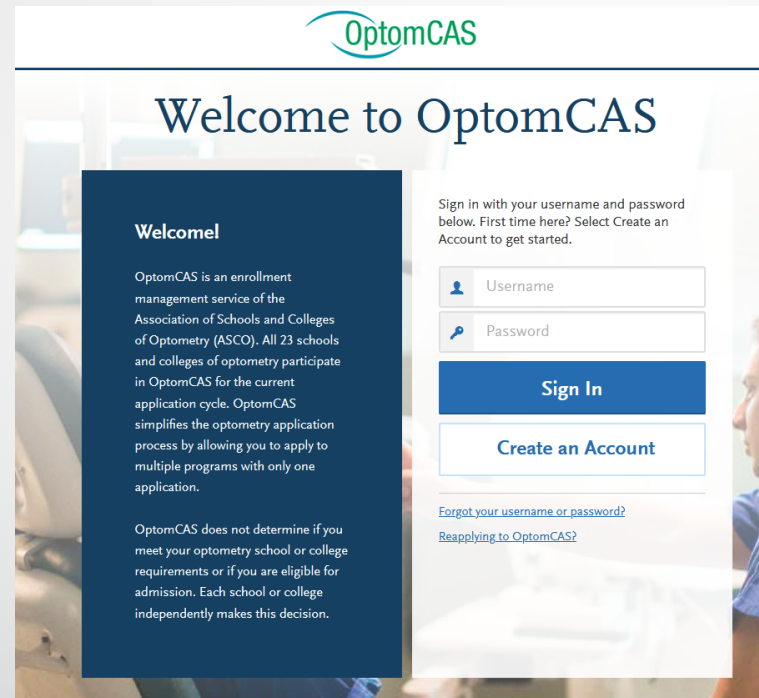
- **Please note:** If you are viewing this application walkthrough before the **June 29, 2023** application launch, there may be some changes in the application not covered in this PPT as the OptomCAS [Applicant Help Center](#) does not update until the application opens.

  - This presentation does **NOT** cover all aspects of the application, so you must do your own research!

  - The OptomCAS [Applicant Help Center](#) offers and online chat session to answer your questions immediately as you are working on your application. I recommend you try there first before you contact them via phone.

- Please use the following information to contact OptomCAS Customer Support:

  - **Hours of Operation:** Monday through Friday (9 am to 5 pm Eastern Time)

  - **Phone Number:** 617–612–2888

  - **Email:** optomcasinfo@optomcas.org. When contacting via email, please include your full name, OptomCAS ID number and detailed question. Typical response is within 2-3 business days.

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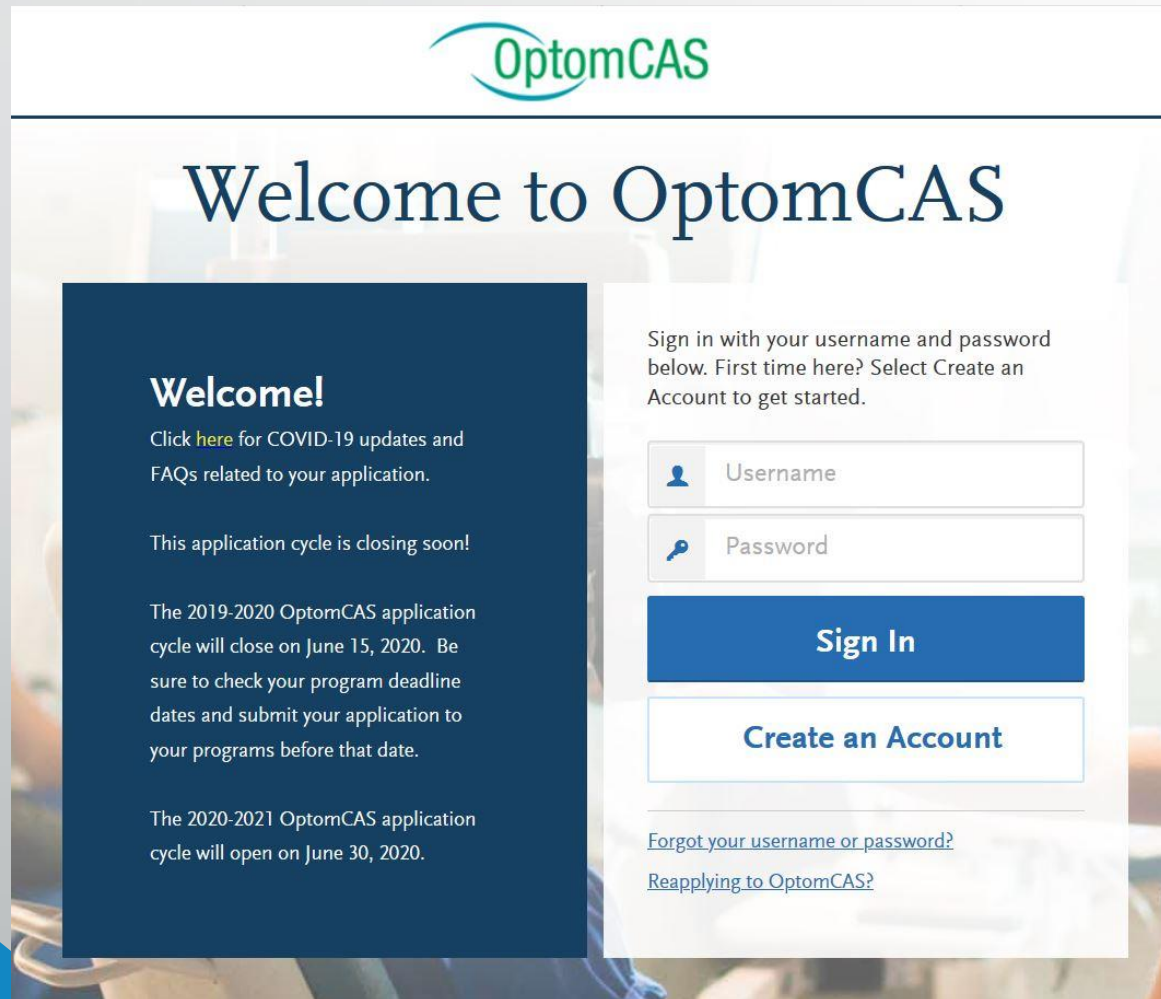
When To Apply/Checklist

- The 2023-2024 OptomCAS application cycle will open on **June 30, 2022**.

- **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.
  - Generated an OATPIN
  - Taken or scheduled the OAT
  - Asked your (4) evaluators to write letters of recommendation (typically, one optometrist, two hard science professors and one professional letter). Review the Letters of Recommendation 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
  - Obtained transcripts to enter all college courses and credits into the application. You will need to input courses taken at all colleges using the source names/numbers.
  - 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

- New applicants can start some parts of the application early and not submit it. Certain contents will transfer to the new application when you open it June 29. Details about transferable content are here.
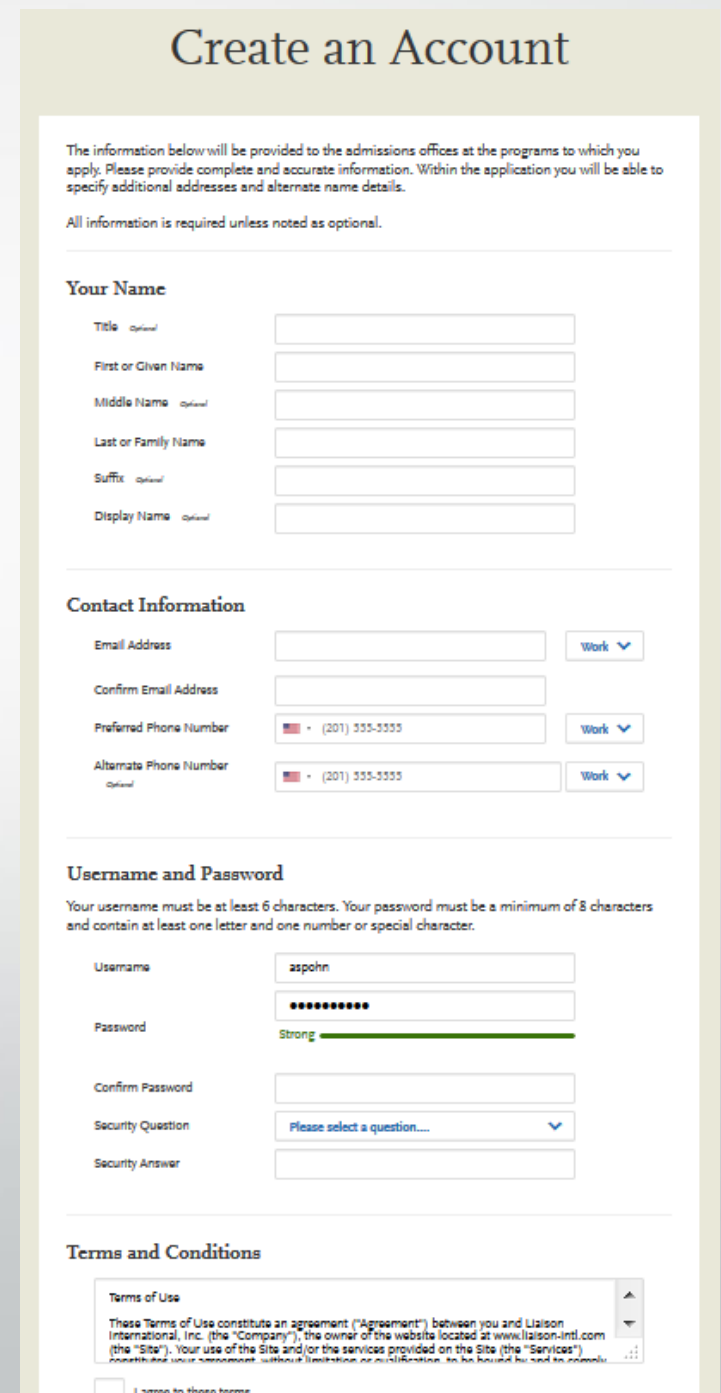
When You Should Contact a Program Directly

- OptomCAS can assist with application-related questions. For all other inquiries, including the following, please contact your program directly:

  - Admission requirements and policies

  - Deadline requirements

  - Prerequisites

  - Supplemental materials

  - Requirements regarding the identity of recommenders

  - Status of your application after it has been verified

  - Admission decisions and interview questions

  - Content and duration of a particular school's program

Creating An Account

- Click [here](#) to create an OptomCAS account.

Account Basics

- When creating an account, consider the following:

- Create only one account to avoid processing delays and difficulties. Duplicate accounts and any documents associated with those accounts are deleted.

- For your own security, do not share your password or account information with anyone.

- Usernames and passwords are case-sensitive.

- Use an email address that you check frequently to avoid missing important updates.

New Account Instructions

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 the arrows to review helpful information. When you're ready, click **Start Your Application!**

- Use the filters to find and select the programs to which you want to apply. Note that you can go back and change these selections at any point before you submit your application.

- When you are finished selecting your programs, click **I am Done, Review My Selections**.

- Review your selections, then click **Continue To My Application** to view your dashboard.

  *You must enter your first and last name. If you only have one name, enter it in the applicable name field (i.e., first name or last name), then:

  - Enter **FNU** if your first name is unknown.

  - Enter **LNU** if your last name is unknown.

Once your account is created, you receive a CAS ID number. This appears in the top right corner of your application. If you need to contact customer service, provide this number to them so they can quickly find your application.

Starting Your OptomCAS Application

***Click here to watch this introductory video.

Reapplying To OptomCAS

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.

- Note that your programs may be able to see that you are a re-applicant.

    - 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.

Reapplying To OptomCAS

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 recommendation, 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.

Select Application Data to Copy

Select all of the application sections for which you wish to copy application data. Any data you entered previously will be carried forward.

Colleges Attended and Transcript Entry will not be editable for applicants who were Verified in a previous application. You will be able to edit in progress degrees and coursework, and add new degrees and coursework. If you did not progress far enough in your previous application to be Verified, all information in Colleges Attended and Transcript Entry will be editable. All other sections of the application will be editable.

Personal Information

+	Biographic Information
+	Citizenship Information
+	Contact Information
+	Other Information
+	Race & Ethnicity

Academic Information

⊘	**Colleges Attended**
+	Standardized Tests
⊘	**Transcript Entry**

Supporting Information

| + | Achievements |
| + | Experiences |

Save and Continue

Professional Transcript Entry (PTE)
Note that if you paid for PTE in a previous cycle, your PTE coursework only carries forward if you submitted your application and approved the PTE coursework entry in the previous cycle. See **Professional Transcript Entry (PTE)** for more information.

Reapplying To OptomCAS

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.

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

Updating Coursework

If you completed additional coursework since the last cycle:

- Update the **Colleges Attended** section to include changes to dates, degree statuses, and schools.
- 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.
- 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.

Before Selecting a Program

- **Check the program's [deadline requirements](#).** Ensure you have enough time to apply. Determine if OptomCAS or your program requires letters of recommendations, 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. OptomCAS cannot offer refunds if a school you selected has already filled its class, nor can they transfer the payment to another program.

Selecting a Program

- Click **Add Program** at the top of the application home page.

- Use the filters to locate the programs you are interested in applying to.

- 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.

- Continue adding programs as desired.

- 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. OptomCAS does not offer refunds for selections made in error and does 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**
  - Click **Add Program** at the top of the page.
  - Click the checkmark next to the program name.
  - Click **Delete** to confirm.
- **From the Submit Application Page**
  - Click **Submit Application** at the top of the page.
  - Click the trash can icon next to the program you want to remove.
  - Click **Yes, Delete this Program**.

Program Selection

OptomCAS Application Fees

- 1 school: $185

- Each additional school: $75

- Average applicant applies to 7-10 schools

- 10 schools: $860 (Under the Submit Application tab you can see the total cost before you confirm your application)

APPLY EARLY!

- Since optometry school acceptance is typically 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 is used to gather your biographic and contact information, as well as citizenship, race/ethnicity, and other information.

- OptomCAS Release Statement
- Biographic Information
- Contact Information
- Citizenship Information
- Race & Ethnicity
- Other Information

OptomCAS Release Statement

Overview

- In this section, you must review and respond to the following release statements in order to submit your application. Once you submit your application, your responses cannot be edited. Please review these instructions and the content of the statements carefully. It is your responsibility to read and understand these statements before responding to them. If you have any questions regarding these statements, contact customer service at 617-612-2888 for clarification before making your selections.

Continuing Disclosure

- Disclosure is a continuing duty. Select the checkbox to indicate you understand and agree to the statement.

ASCO Standards

- Select **Yes** to indicate you reviewed and understand the ASCO Functional Standards for Didactic and Clinical Optometric Training.

OptomCAS Applicant Responsibilities

- Select the checkbox to indicate you agree to follow the Applicant Responsibilities.

OptomCAS Code of Conduct

- This release certifies that you have read and agree to abide by the Applicant Code of Conduct. OptomCAS applicants are expected and required to abide by the Applicant Code of Conduct in order to be considered for entry into the optometry profession.

Advisor Release

- Selecting **Yes** for this release allows OptomCAS to release certain information to pre-health advisors at schools you previously attended. This information includes some application information, including your GPA, the names of the optometry programs to which you applied, and which program, if any, you matriculate into. They will not see documentation such as transcripts or letters of recommendation.

- If you select **No,** OptomCAS will not release your information to advisors. We encourage you to authorize this release, as it is useful to advisors assisting you and other future applicants; however, it will not affect the consideration given to your application

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:
  - Birth names (if different from current legal name)
  - 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)

Sex: Select the appropriate option.

Gender Identity: Select your gender identity from the drop-down.

Pronouns: Enter any pronouns you wish to be referred to by (i.e., they, them, theirs). This question is optional.

Birth Information

- Enter your date of birth in MM/DD/YYYY format. For example, January 7, 2001, would be listed as 01/07/2001. Make sure you enter your date of birth correctly; failure to do so could cause significant delays with matching documentation and test scores.
- Then, enter your country, city, state/territory/province, and county of birth.
- 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.

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.

  - ❖ 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.

Residency Information

- Provide your residency information, including your legal state of residence.

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 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.

Visa Information

* Do you have a U.S. Visa?

(●) Yes   ( ) No

* Visa Number: [_____]

* What type of Visa? [Select Visa Type ▼]

* Who Issued your Visa? [_____]

* Issued in City [_____]

* Country [Select Country ▼]

* Valid From [_____ 📅] MM/DD/YYYY

* Valid Until [_____ 📅] MM/DD/YYYY

Visa Sponsor [_____]

Race & Ethnicity

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 you select **Yes**, enter a brief explanation in the field provided. Include 1) a brief description of the incident, 2) specific charge made, 3) related dates, 4) consequence, and 5) a reflection on the incident and how the incident has impacted your life.

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 Information

- Select your answers to any additional questions. Answering these questions helps programs gather information to develop future recruitment strategies.

OAT PIN

- Enter your Optometry Admission Test (OAT) PIN.

COVID-19

- Enter your responses to questions related to COVID-19 impact.

OptomCAS Academic History

- This section is where you input the colleges you attended. Additionally, you can provide information about tests you have taken or plan to take, such as the OAT.

- OptomCAS will **NOT** process any document that is received **prior to June 29, 2023.**
    - Official transcripts received earlier than this **date will be discarded.**

Colleges Attended

- **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

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

- 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?**

- Select if you obtained (or plan to obtain) a degree from the selected institution.
    - If you earned or plan to earn a degree, provide details about the earned or expected degree.
    - If you have a double major, select the checkbox to enter your second major. Note that you can only enter one minor.
    - Click **Add another Degree** to add additional degrees for this same college or university.

- 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.
    - 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.
    - 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).

- Select if you are still attending your institution. Enter dates of the first and last (if applicable) terms you attended. Be sure to only enter each college or university you attended once, regardless of gaps in your attendance there.

- Click **Save This College or University** to complete the entry.

Sending Transcripts

- For each college or university entered, click **Order** and select if you are ordering electronic transcripts (recommended) or submitting a transcript via mail. See Sending Official Transcripts to OptomCAS for more information.

- 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.

Requirements

- Enter all coursework you completed at all US and English Canadian colleges or universities attended. See **Foreign and French-Canadian Transcripts** and **Study Abroad or Overseas US Transcripts** for guidelines on foreign coursework. Note the following:

  - 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, OptomCAS specialists can enter it for you for an additional fee. See the **Professional Transcript Entry Service (PTE)** topic for more information.

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO ON TRANSCRIPT ENTRY

Sending Transcripts

How to Send US or English-Canadian Transcripts

- Enter your colleges or universities in the **Colleges Attended** section before requesting any transcripts.

- Click **Order** under each school listed.

- Select if you are ordering an electronic transcript (recommended) or submitting a transcript via mail. You only need to submit one transcript from each school regardless of the number of programs you're applying to.

  - Some schools are part of a college district (e.g., Maricopa County Community College District, San Diego Community College, San Mateo Community College District, etc.). If you attended more than one college in a college district, you only need to order one transcript for all colleges (e.g., the San Mateo Community College District transcript includes all coursework from Cañada College, College of San Mateo, and Skyline College).

- If ordering an electronic transcript, select the electronic transcript vendor and follow the prompts. Review **Sending Transcripts Electronically** below for more guidance.

- If submitting a transcript via mail, click **Download Transcript ID Form** and print the form. Review **Sending Transcripts by Mail** below for more guidance.

- Click **I Ordered My Transcript** once you either requested an electronic transcript or downloaded the Transcript ID form. Or, click **I Will Do This Later** to return to **Colleges Attended**.

- Follow up with your school(s) to ensure that your transcripts were mailed, and obtain the date they sent them. Be aware that processing times vary by school and may take longer towards the end of a semester. Some schools may not send your transcript until the semester is over.

- Monitor the **Check Status** page to ensure your transcript is received. On average, it takes up to seven business days for your transcript to post to your application from the date we receive it. If your transcript is not posted after this timeframe, contact customer service.

Sending Transcripts

Sending Transcripts by Mail * I recommend you send transcripts electronically.**

- Contact the registrar at each institution you attended and request one transcript be sent to OptomCAS.

- Provide the registrar with the following items:

  - OptomCAS Transcript ID Form (download from the application). Ask the registrar to attach it to your official transcripts. This form is not required, but strongly recommended as it helps ensure your official transcripts are properly matched to your application. If you cannot use this form, make sure the registrar prints "OptomCAS" and your full OptomCAS ID number on the transcript before mailing it.

  - Any school-specific forms required by the registrar.

  - Any transcript fees required by the registrar.

  - All information needed by the registrar to properly identify you in the school's database.

  - Any name changes.

  - Your OptomCAS ID number.

- Your registrar should mail your paper transcripts to the following address:

- OptomCAS Transcript Processing Center
  PO Box 9119
  Watertown, MA 02471

- OptomCAS is not responsible for any materials lost in the mail or delays caused by the Registrar's Office. Express or certified mail does not guarantee faster processing or receipt.

Sending Transcripts

Sending Transcripts Electronically

- **In rare cases, if your institution cannot submit official transcripts by mail or electronically from Credentials Solutions, Parchment, or National Student Clearinghouse due, OptomCAS can accept official transcripts sent via email from the Registrar directly. Your institution can contact the Customer Service team for more information.**

- **We cannot accept transcripts sent via email from applicants.**

- OptomCAS only accepts electronic transcripts from Credentials Solutions, Parchment, and National Student Clearinghouse. If your school does not offer any of these services, your transcript must be sent by mail.

- If your school requires that you use a service other than Credentials Solutions, Parchment, or National Student Clearinghouse, you should ask that service to mail the transcripts instead of sending them electronically. Since you cannot include the Transcript ID Form, you should include your full OptomCAS ID number when entering the OptomCAS mailing address.

- When using any of these services, select OptomCAS as the recipient. If you can't select OptomCAS and instead are asked for an email address, your transcript must be sent by mail. Do not send your transcript to the OptomCAS customer service email.

- **UGA uses Parchment:**

  - **Parchment**

  - Click here to see if your school offers the Parchment service. If your school is not listed, your transcript must be sent by mail. Otherwise, follow the instructions to proceed. Once your transcript is requested, it takes up to seven business days for it to post to your application. If your transcript is not posted after this timeframe, contact Parchment directly to confirm the order was completed, then contact customer service.

FOR MORE TRANSCRIPT INFORMATIN CLICK HERE.

FOREIGN AND FRENCH-CANADIAN TRANSCRIPTS CLICK HERE

STUDY ABROAD OR OVERSEAS US TRANSCRIPTS CLICK HERE

Ordering Electronic Transcripts

You will need to select "order" under each College of University that you attended and entered into your application. *For UGA, you will select Parchment, copy UGA's transcript ID number, and select "I will do this later." Login to your My UGA account and continue with instructions on next slide.*

UGA Transcript Process

Once you click on the Parchment icon it will direct you to a search page. Type in **OptomCAS** in the search bar. Select the correct option and follow the instructions.

Once you are logged into the **My UGA Portal** you will select Order Transcripts (Parchment). Select transcript.

Remember **DO NOT** send your transcripts before the application opens.
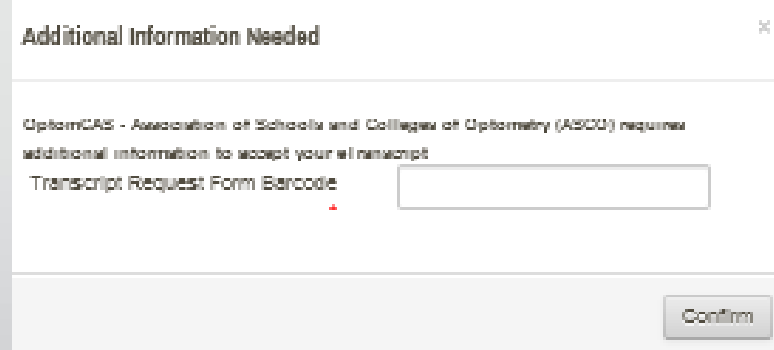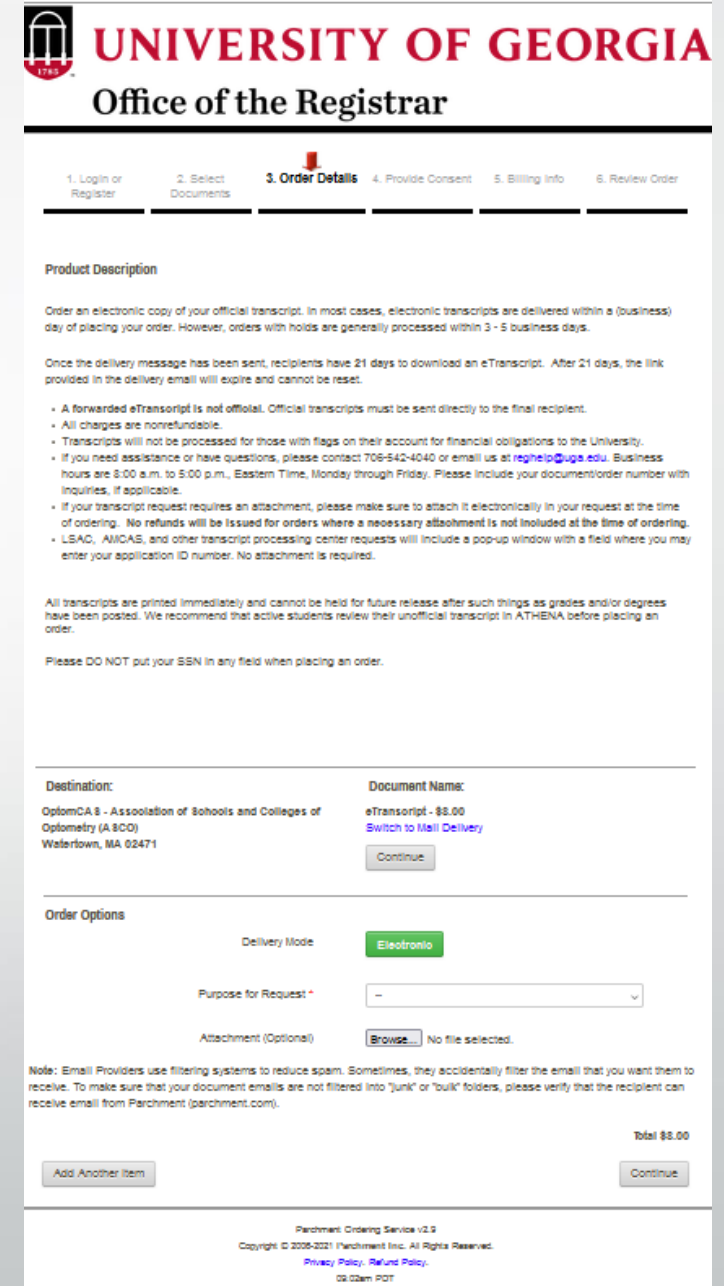
Transcript Process

- Read the directions carefully and double check that the destination is correct.

- Under Order Options you will choose "Apply for graduate admission," under Purpose for request.

- Click Continue. Here is where it will ask you to enter your transcript ID number that you copied before:

- Follow payment instructions from there.

Transcript Process

It is your responsibility to monitor your application for transcript receipt.

- OptomCAS will **NOT** notify applicants concerning missing transcripts. The status of all transcripts can be viewed in the **CHECK STATUS** tab of your application.

- Allow 5 business days for the school to send the transcript and another 5 business days for OptomCAS to post it to your application. If after this time your transcript is still not posted, contact the school to verify when it was sent, review and correct any [posting delays](#) from your end, and resubmit.

Transcript FAQ

If I have attended multiple institutions, do I need to send a transcript from each school?

- Yes. All applicants are required to send a 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.

Transcript Entry

***Click here to view video

Professional Transcript Entry

- This is an optional service and costs $75 for up to 3 transcripts, $100 for 4-6 transcripts and $150 for 7 or more transcripts.
- Please note that these fees are for coursework entry only and are in addition to OptomCAS regular application fees.
- For further details about this service [click here](#).
- There will be a link to the professional service within the application.
- I recommend that you double check that everything was entered correctly.

Coursework Entry

Enter a Term

- Click **Start** to begin entering courses for a college or university.

- Add a semester, quarter, or trimester depending on the term system you selected in the **Colleges Attended** section.

- Select a term. Select a year. Options are based on the time spans you selected in the **Colleges Attended** section.

- 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 on the next slide for more information. If you're entering courses for a term that is currently in progress or planned, select **In Progress/Planned**.

- Click **Save**.

- Continue adding terms, as needed.

Coursework Entry

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.
  - Dual enrollment courses (college courses taken during high school) are considered Freshman and should be listed under the college where you took them. Do **not** report these courses again as transfer credits at your undergraduate institution.
  - AP, IB, exempt courses are all listed in the freshman semester of the first college accepting these credits or exemptions.
- **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

Enter Courses for a Completed Term

- Click **Add A Course** under the appropriate term.
- Enter the course code. Department prefixes and course numbers must exactly match what appears on your official transcript.
- Enter the course title. You can abbreviate it if it does not fit in the text box.
- Select the course subject. If you're unsure, make your best guess; our team will help you if it doesn't match.
- Enter the course credits exactly as they appear on your transcript. See the **Course Credits** section below for more details.
- Enter the grade exactly as it appears on your transcript, including any pluses or minuses.
  - 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.
  - 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.
- The **CAS Grade** populates automatically. This allows us to standardize your coursework for all programs and cannot be edited.
- Click **Save**.
- Continue adding courses, as needed.

Coursework Entry

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.

- 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.

- Enter the course code.

- Enter the course title. You can abbreviate it if it does not fit in the text box.

- Select the course subject. If you're unsure, make your best guess.

- 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.

- Click **Save**.

- Continue adding courses, as needed.

Coursework Entry

Enter Narrative Transcripts

If your institution uses a narrative transcript, enter your coursework as described above. If the transcript lists "suggested" credits and/or grades, be sure to enter those as well; otherwise, list the course credits as "0.0" and the grades as "Pass."

Your programs will see the list of classes you took, along with a copy of the official narrative transcript that you submit.

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), CLEP, DANTE, Regents, and courses you "tested out of" at college or university. List these credits under your first term at the school that awarded you the credit and enter "CR" as the grade. If no course prefix or number appears on the transcript, enter "N/A" for Not Applicable.
  - Be sure to designate these test credits appropriately in the Transcript Review section (below).

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.

Transcript Review

- Once all courses have been entered, you will click **Review and Finalize My Transcripts.**

- In Transcript Review, you will be asked to identify additional attributes about your coursework including **Primary College** and courses that are **Repeated**, **Advanced Placement**, **Other Tests**, **Honors**, and **Study Abroad**.

Transcript Review: Repeated Courses

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.

- Record full credit values and grades for all repeated courses. OptomCAS is required to include all repeated courses in GPA calculations, regardless of an institution's or state's academic forgiveness policies.

- 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

- This step indicates 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.

Standardized Tests

Self-Reported Test Scores

- You can self-report your Standardized Test scores or report tests you plan to take in the **Standardized Tests** section. Some of the programs you apply to may require you to report certain test scores; be sure to check with your programs to ensure you are completing all requirements.

- Note that self-reporting your scores is not the same as providing official scores to your programs. If your programs require official test scores, see **Sending Official Test Scores** for more information.

- Click here for information on reporting your OAT scores.

Add a Test Score

- Navigate to the **Standardized Tests** section.

- Find the test you took in the list and click **Add Test Score**. In some cases, you may only be able to enter scores for certain tests.

- Select **Yes** under **Have you taken the test**.

- Enter the date you took the test.

- Enter all applicable scores.

- Click **Save This Test**.

- After submitting your application, you can continue to add new test entries to this section, but you cannot update or delete previous entries.

Add a Planned Test

- Navigate to the **Standardized Tests** section.

- Find the test you took in the list and click **Add Test Score**. In some cases, you may only be able to enter scores for certain tests.

- Select **No** under **Have you taken the test**.

- Enter the date you plan to take the test.

- Click **Save This Test**.

Add a Test Not Listed

- Click **Add a Standardized Test** at the bottom of the page.

- Select the test from the drop-down.

- Select whether you took the test or not.

- If you select **No,** enter the date on which you plan to take the test. If you select **Yes**, enter the test date, indicate if the test was internet-based (IBT) or paper-based, and enter the Test Registration ID.

- Click **Save this Test**.

Official OAT Scores

- The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is a standardized examination designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. OptomCAS programs may require applicants to take the OAT or some may accept another official standardized test, such as the GRE. OptomCAS recommends that you contact your programs directly to determine their requirements.

- If OAT scores are required, 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.

  - CLICK HERE FOR GRE INFORMATION

Letters Of Evaluation

Before You Begin

Letters of recommendation (sometimes called Letters of Evaluation or Letters of Reference) are submitted by the recommenders themselves; they cannot be completed or submitted by the applicant or another party on behalf of the recommender. OptomCAS is not responsible for verifying recommenders' identities. If a discrepancy is found, OptomCAS reservea the right to contact the appropriate individuals to investigate and to share the discrepancy with all programs.

Before getting started, consider the following:

- **All letters of recommendation must be submitted electronically** by recommenders using [Letters by Liaison](), the Recommender Portal for OptomCAS.

- [Research each program's requirements](). You should determine whether your programs have specific requirements regarding recommender roles or relationships before listing recommenders on your application. Many programs have strict guidelines and completed letters of recommendation cannot be removed or replaced.

- **Prepare your recommenders.** Once you choose your recommenders, be sure to inform them about the process and that they will be completing the letters of recommendation electronically. We recommend getting their preferred email address and asking that they monitor that inbox for your request (which will come from [optomcasinfo@optomcas.org]()), including any junk or spam folders.

Requirements

- You are required to request **at least 1** and may request a **maximum of 4** letters of recommendation. If you want to submit more, send those additional letters of recommendation directly to your programs.

Letters Of Evaluation

Submit a Request

- In the **Letters of Recommendation** section, click **Create Letters of Recommendation Request**.

- Enter the recommender's full name and email address.

- Select the date by which you would like this letters of recommendation completed.

- Enter a brief message or note for the recommender.

- Select whether you want to waive your right of access to the letters of recommendation. See **Waiver** below.

- Click the checkboxes to indicate your permission for us (and programs) to contact your recommenders.

- Click **Save This Letters of Recommendation Request** to submit it. Once you do so, an email is immediately sent to the recommender.

- Confirm with your recommenders that they received the email notification.

- Use the **Check Status** tab to monitor the status of your letters of recommendation. Completed letters of recommendation are marked as "Complete" and have a Complete Date listed. Follow up with your recommenders if their letters of recommendation are still marked as "Requested" or "Accepted." It is your responsibility to ensure that letters of recommendation requests are received and completed on time. We will not notify applicants about missing letters of recommendation.

Letters Of Evaluation

Resend the Letters of Recommendation Request

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

Change the Recommender's Email Address

- If you entered an incorrect email address for any recommender (or if any recommender 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 letters of recommendation unless you choose to waive your right of inspection and review. Prior to requesting any letters of recommendation, 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 recommenders and designated programs. Your waiver decision serves the same purpose as a legal signature and is binding.

- Selecting **Yes** indicates to programs that your recommender completed their letter of recommendation 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 letter of recommendation. **Programs may view this type of letter of recommendation as a more accurate representation of an applicant's qualifications.**

- Selecting **No** indicates to programs that your recommender completed their letter of recommendation with the understanding that you may choose to view it in the future. Selecting this option does not allow you to view your letters of recommendation via the application. If you do not waive your right to view the letters of recommendation, you may ask your recommender for a copy of the letter. **Programs may view this type of letter of recommendation 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

- You must have a minimum of **1 requested evaluation** in order to submit your application. You may enter a maximum of 4.

- 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 an **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.

You can also check your LOR status in the Check Status section of your application.

Letters of Recommendations

You must have a minimum of **1 requested evaluation** in order to submit your application. You may enter a maximum of 4.

In this section, you can send requests for letters of recommendation. Letters of Recommendation (sometimes called Letters of Evaluation or Letters of Reference) are submitted by the recommenders themselves via **Letters by Liaison**, our recommender portal; they cannot be completed or submitted by the applicant or another party on behalf of the recommender. Click here for more information.

You can edit and delete requests that are in Requested or Accepted status. Once a request is Completed, you cannot make any changes regardless of whether you've submitted your application or not.

Smith, John ✎ 🗑

✓

Evaluation Request: Individual   Status > Requested   Submitted: 05/13/2020

Create Letters of Recommendation Request

⊕ **Create Letters of Recommendation Request**

Overall Status

> Transcripts — Arrived 0 of 1

∨ Letters of Recommendations — Requested > Accepted 0 of 1

John Smith
Individual   Needed By: All Programs   Requested

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.

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.

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.

* Indicates required field

Experience Type

* What type of experience do you want to add?   [Type ▾]

Organization

* Name   [   ]
Address   [   ]
Address 2   [   ]
City   [   ]
* Country   [Select Country ▾]
Zip Code   [   ]
* State/Province [Select a State/Province ▾]

Supervisor

First Name   [   ]
Last Name   [   ]
Title   [   ]
Contact Phone   [▀ ▾ (201) 555-0123]
Contact Email   [   ]

Experience Dates

* Start Date   [📅] MM/DD/YYYY
* Current Experience ◯ Yes   ◯ No
* End Date   [📅] MM/DD/YYYY
* Status   [Status   ▾]

Experience Details

* Title   [   ]
* Type of Recognition
                    ☐ Compensated
                    ☐ Received Academic Credit
                    ☐ Volunteer
* Average Weekly Hours [   ] x
* Number of Weeks   [   ] =
* Total Hours   [   ]
* Description/Key Responsibilities
                    [   ]
                                   0 word   0/600

* Release Authorization (May we contact this organization?)   ◯ Yes   ◯ No

✓ Save & Continue

Enter Your Experience

- Click **Add an Experience**.

- Select the appropriate experience type from the drop-down.

- Enter information about the organization where the experience took place.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- Select **Yes** or **No** to indicate a release authorization to allow your selected programs to contact the organization.

- 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.

Utilize Core Competencies

- There are [15 Core Competencies created by the AAMC](#) (Association of American Medical Colleges) and you can utilize these Core Competencies to help you write your 600-character experience descriptions. Although this was created for pre-med students, it is still useful for your descriptions. A competency is an observable behavior that combines knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes related to a specific activity. There are four categories: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Thinking and Reasoning, and Science

- The work and activities you are already involved with, and your life experiences, likely demonstrate these competencies. For example, you can demonstrate the scientific inquiry competency by excelling in scientific research, illustrate a service orientation competency by leading a service trip, or show capacity for improvement in a reflection at the end of your description.

- Use the AAMC core competencies to guide what you will say that you did and gained from your experience.

- Carefully compose and proof-read your descriptions.

- Click [here](#) for a Core Competencies Worksheet.

Interpersonal Competencies

▶ **Service Orientation**: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society; locally, nationally, and globally.

▶ **Social Skills**: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

▶ **Cultural Competence**: Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

▶ **Teamwork**: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

▶ **Oral Communication**: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

Intrapersonal Competencies

▶ **Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others:** Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

▶ **Reliability and Dependability:** Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

▶ **Resilience and Adaptability:** Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

▶ **Capacity for Improvement:** Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

▶ **Critical Thinking**: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

▶ **Quantitative Reasoning**: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.

▶ **Scientific Inquiry**: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.

▶ **Written Communication**: Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.

Science Competencies

▶ **Living Systems:** Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.

▶ **Human Behavior:** Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

Volunteer

Service Orientation, Collaboration, Teamwork, Oral Communication, Cultural Competence, Critical Thinking, Social Skills, Resilience and Adaptability

We deliver art programs to area senior citizens. As Vice President, I coordinate interactions between members and the community to cultivate relationships between different groups through art. For example, I collaborated with the executive board to plan monthly activities with local nursing home residents, guiding them through crafts and facilitating conversations. During the pandemic, we maintained membership connections by shifting to a remote approach, creating projects together over Zoom to give to the residents. We use the power of a shared interest to bridge diverse communities.
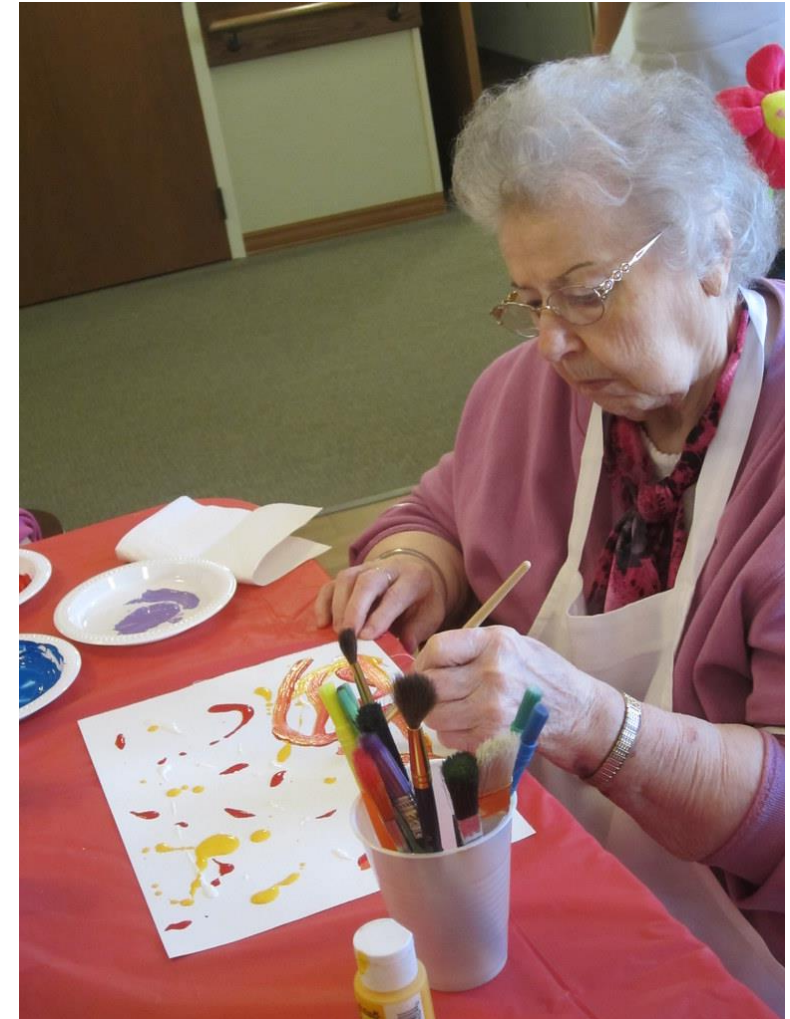
Employment

Reliability and Dependability, Collaboration, Teamwork, Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, Social Skills, Resilience and Adaptability

As a host, I was responsible for greeting and seating 50 groups of customers per shift. I coordinated with the wait staff to balance service stations and ensure that customer needs were met. During peak hours I communicated with the team to help any sections that were overwhelmed while also cleaning tables as needed to seat more patrons. After 4 months I was promoted with the added responsibility of training new wait staff and resolving customer complaints. I learned how to deescalate tension and think clearly in stressful situations.

Achievements

Overview

In this section, you can enter any relevant professional or academic achievements in several categories, or types. Review the definitions below, consider the achievement you earned, and choose the category that you think best fits.

Although you can enter any achievements that you believe are relevant to your application, we recommend focusing on those achievements within the last 10 years and at the collegiate level and above.

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

- Click **Add An Achievement**.

- Select the type of achievement.

- Enter the name of the achievement.

- Enter the name of the organization that presented the achievement, if applicable.

- Enter the issued date.

- 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.

- 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.

Add Your Achievements

Update your achievements any time prior to submission. After submission, you can add more achievements. However, you cannot update or delete completed achievements.

* Indicates required field

Achievement Details

* Type	Select Achievement Type
* Name	
Name of Presenting Organization	
Issued Date	MM/DD/YYYY
Brief description	

0 word   0/600

Program Materials Section

If the specific programs you are applying to have any additional application requirements, use this section to provide the requested information. You can also view important information about each program you are applying to, including deadline requirements.

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.

Program Materials

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 uploaded 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.

- Once your application is submitted, you cannot re-upload, update, or edit the documents in any way; however, you can upload new documents.

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

- Click **Assign Course**.

- 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.

- Click **Save and Exit**.

Program Materials

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 (Essay Question)

- 1 page; 4,500 characters including spaces. You will find the personal statement (often identified as an essay question) located under each programs question tab.

- 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.

- 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.

- Click here for the PPAO online Personal Statement Guide.

Personal Statement:

* Please describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest, and your future career goals. (4500 characters)

0 word   0/4500

PERSONAL STATEMENT ADVICE FROM THE UGA CAREER CENTER

Writing Your Personal Statement

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA Career Center

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 PEEL:

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.

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: Preach, whine, condescend, or repeat info from your resume.
DON'T: Submit supplemental materials unless they are requested.

4 Key Components of Your Statement

1. Motivation

Why do you want to pursue this career? Think about your initial aspiration 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.

Adapted from University of Minnesota "Personal Statements for a Health Program," 2017

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," "are," "was") 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

Submit 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 letters of recommendation with "new" or "in-progress" statuses and select additional programs to apply to. All other sections are read-only. Updating details are found here.

  - **You can submit your application before your transcripts and letters of recommendation are received.** Please note, however, that OptomCAS will not review your application until all your transcripts, payments, and letters of recommendation 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 the busiest times for the OptomCAS you may experience page loading delays, and these may occur outside of customer service's hours of operation. OptomCAS cannot grant deadline extensions if you miss your deadline; contact your programs directly for more information.

Submit Application

***Click here to view video.

Submit Application

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 requested letters of recommendation 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.

Check Your OptomCAS Notifications and Status

Notifications

- As you progress through the application process, you'll receive important notifications and critical alerts. Applicants are responsible for monitoring these notifications and following up on any required actions. To view your notifications, click **View My Notifications** on the left side of the application dashboard.

Application Statuses

- Applicants are responsible for monitoring the status of an application. Notifications are not sent for any missing items. To help you keep track of your application and all materials, click **Check Status** at the top of the application dashboard.

- Keep in mind that it takes 7-10 business days from the date of receipt to post transcripts and official test scores to your application. Letters of recommendations are immediately updated once received from your recommender.

- Your application status may be:

  - **In Progress:** Your application has not yet been submitted or you haven't paid the application fee.

  - **Received:** Your application has been submitted, but you are missing required documents.

  - **Complete:** All required materials were received and your application is in line for verification and is considered complete. Note that your programs may require additional materials for your application to be considered complete. Check with each program for more details. Once your application enters this status, it takes two weeks (on average) to move to the Verified status.

  - **Undelivered:** This status indicates that an error was found and your application was returned to you for corrections. See Correcting an Undelivered Application.

  - **Verified:** Your application was processed and, if applicable, your GPA was calculated and made available to your programs. You'll receive a confirmation notification that your application was verified. Once your application is verified, you should direct any questions about its status to the program(s) you applied to.

Check Your OptomCAS Notifications and Status

Transcript Statuses. If you submit transcripts to OptomCAS, your transcript's status may be:

- **Not Arrived:** This status indicates that your transcript is still being processed and has not been posted to your application yet. On average, it takes up to seven business days for your transcript to post to your application from the date OptomCAS received it.

- **Arrived:** This status indicates that your transcript has been processed and is now posted to your application. Your transcript will be shared with all your programs.

Letters of Recommendation Statuses. If you submit letters of recommendation requests, your letter of recommendation's status may be:

- **Requested:** This status indicates that the request was sent to the recommender, but they have not accepted or declined it. They must accept your request before they can submit their letter of recommendation.

- **Accepted:** This status indicates that the recommender accepted your request but has not yet submitted their letter of recommendation.

- **Completed:** This status indicates that the recommender completed and submitted their letter of recommendation and it was sent to your program(s).

- **Declined:** This status indicates that the recommender declined your letter of recommendation request. You can click **Update Letters of Recommendation** to add a new letters of recommendation request.

- **Expired:** This status only appears once the cycle closes. Letters of recommendation can no longer be submitted. Review the OptomCAS Cycle Dates page to learn the final dates when you can request letters of recommendation and your recommenders can complete letter of recommendation requests.

Test Score Status. If you submit official test scores to OptomCAS, your official test score's status is listed as **Accepted** with the date OptomCAS received it.

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

After you submit, you can make limited changes to your application and materials. Review the changes allowed for coursework, transcripts, and other sections below.

Updating Your Coursework and Transcripts

➤ **What is Academic Update?**

- Academic Update allows you to update planned or in-progress coursework that you completed since your application was originally verified. Academic Update is an optional process; check with your programs to determine if they require it. During the Academic Update window, you can also enter new planned/in-progress coursework for the upcoming term(s).

➤ **Am I Eligible for Academic Update?**

- You are eligible for Academic Update if you have at least one program in the Verified status by February 2, 2024. You can find your application status under the Check Status tab. Updates are available within the following timeframe:

- December 15, 2023 and February 2, 2024

- You will receive an email when the Academic Update period is open and available.

Updating Your OptomCAS Application (Academic Update)

What Happens When I Update My Coursework?

- Academic Update helps ensure your programs have the most up-to-date information about your coursework. If you update your coursework during the Academic Update window, OptomCAS verifies your new courses, calculates updated OptomCAS GPAs, and sends this information to your programs.

- Since updated coursework will be verified, you must arrange for your updated official transcripts to be sent directly to OptomCAS as soon as you receive an email confirmation from them confirming that your Academic Update was successfully submitted. Do not request that transcripts be sent to OptomCAS beforehand; they will not qualify for Academic Update and will need to be resubmitted.

- Once your new transcripts are received, your new coursework is placed in line to be verified. Verifications occur in chronological order and on average take two weeks to complete. You will receive an email when your Academic Update is verified.

- Note that your application status will remain as Verified throughout the Academic Update process.

Which Courses Should I Update?

- You can update any coursework you initially marked 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 2020). If you are updating coursework as a re-applicant, review Use an Existing OptomCAS Account to Re-apply.

- Note that you can only update your grades once during the Academic Update period. For example, if you've listed fall coursework as in-progress or planned, wait until that term is completed and you've received your final grades before you submit your Academic Update. Be mindful of the Academic Update deadline and submit before it closes.

Follow the steps on this page to complete the Academic Update process.

Viewing and Downloading the Full Application PDF

- 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.
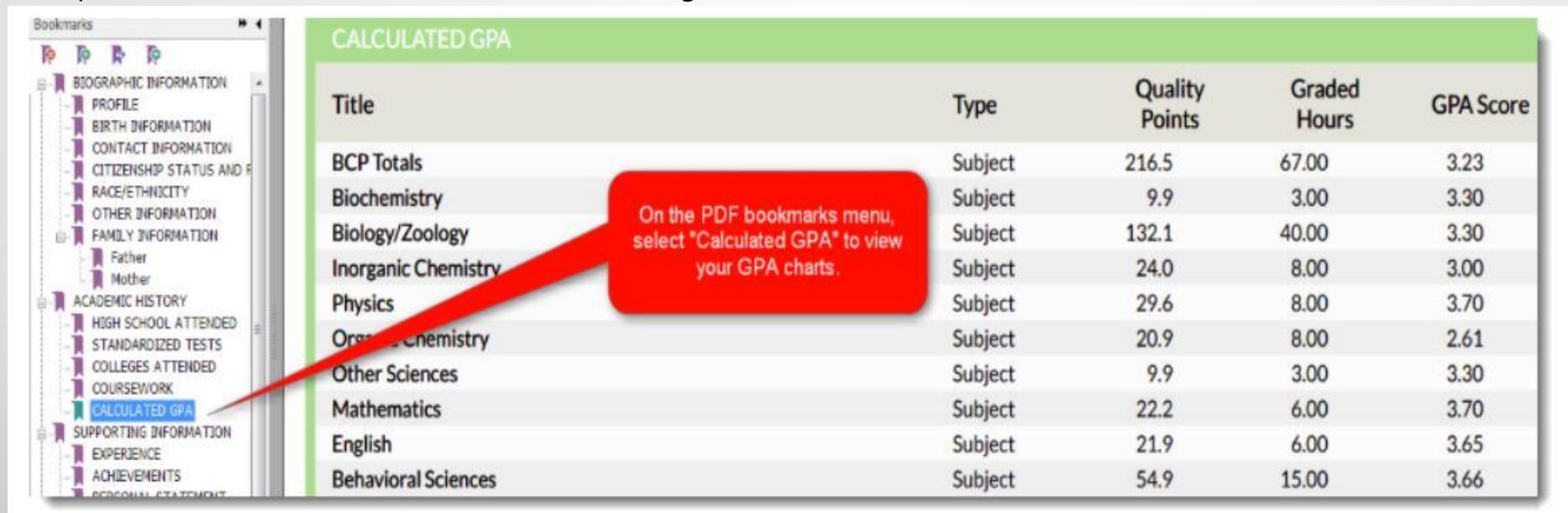
What is Verification?

Definition

- Verification is the process used to ensure all 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 a OptomCAS grade value.

  - GPAs are calculated using the converted grade values.

  - Your degrees are confirmed as awarded, if applicable.

- 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 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**.

Finding Your OptomCAS GPA Calculations

- You can view your OptomCAS GPAs once your application has been verified. To view your OptomCAS GPAs:
  - From the application dashboard, navigate to the **Submit Application** tab.
  - Click the download button located next to any program you applied to.
  - Open the PDF and use the bookmarks to navigate to the **Calculated GPA** section.

Click here to learn how to calculate your OptomCAS GPA.

Click here for OptomCAS Grade Value Charts.

GOOD LUCK!