



College of Optometry Doctor of Optometry (OD) Program

Personal Competencies for Admission and Matriculation

A candidate for admission to the Doctor of Optometry program must possess, or be able to achieve through a reasonable accommodation, certain technical, sensory, and motor function, that would enable the individual to carry out the activities described in the sections that follow. Upon matriculation to the program, the student must continue to possess, or be able to achieve through a reasonable accommodation, the personal competencies outlined below throughout their progression in the Doctor of Optometry program.

To provide guidance to those considering optometry as a profession, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has established functional guidelines for optometric education. The ability to meet these guidelines, along with other criteria established by Western University of Health Sciences, College of Optometry, is necessary for graduation from an optometric professional degree program.

One of the missions of Western University of Health Sciences, College of Optometry is to produce graduates fully qualified to provide quality comprehensive eye care services to the public. To fulfill this mission, of Western University of Health Sciences, College of Optometry must ensure that students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and skill in the provision of optometric care.

The functional guidelines in optometric education require that the candidate/student possess appropriate abilities in the following areas which include, but are not limited to: 1) observation; 2) communication; 3) sensory and motor coordination; 4) intellectual –conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities; and 5) behavioral and social attributes.

For candidates or students who require a reasonable accommodation to meet the competencies outlined below, please contact the Harris Family Center for Disability and Health Policy/Accommodation and Resource Center (CDHP/AARC) at (909) 469-5297.

Under all circumstances, a candidate or student should be able to perform the following in a reasonably independent manner, with or without a reasonable accommodation:

Observation

The student must be able to acquire a defined level of required knowledge as presented through lectures, laboratories, demonstrations, patient interaction, and self-study. Acquiring this body of information necessitates the functional use of visual, auditory, and somatic sensation enhanced by the functional use of other sensory modalities. Examples of these observational skills in which accurate information needs to be extracted in an efficient manner include:

- Visual Abilities (as they relate to such things as visual acuity, color vision and binocularity):
 - Visualizing and reading information from papers, films, slides, video and computer displays
 - Observing optical, anatomic, physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations and experiments
 - Discriminating microscopic images of tissue and microorganisms
 - Observing a patient and noting non-verbal signs
 - Discriminating numbers, images and patterns associated with diagnostic tests and instruments

- Visualizing specific ocular tissues in order to discern three-dimensional relationships, depth and color changes
- Auditory Abilities:
 - Understanding verbal presentations in lecture, laboratory and patient settings
 - Recognizing and interpreting various sounds associated with laboratory experiments as well as diagnostic and therapeutic procedures
- Tactile Abilities:
 - Palpating the eye and related areas to determine the integrity of the underlying structures
 - Palpating and feeling certain cardiovascular pulses

Communication

The student must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently and sensitively with patients and their families, peers, staff, instructors, and other members of the health care team. The student must be able to demonstrate established communication skills. Examples of required communications skills include:

- Relating effectively and sensitively to patients, conveying compassion and empathy
- Perceiving verbal and non-verbal communication such as sadness, worry, agitation and lack of comprehension from patients
- Eliciting information from patients and observing changes in mood and activity
- Communicating quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English with patients and other members of the health care team
- Reading and legibly recording observations, test results and management plans accurately
- Completing assignments, patient records and correspondence accurately and in a timely manner

Sensory and Motor Coordination

Students must possess the sensory and motor skills necessary to perform an eye examination, including emergency care. In general, this requires sufficient exteroception sense (touch, pain, temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis and vibratory) and fine motor function (significant coordination and manual dexterity using arms, wrists, hands and fingers).

Examples of skill required include but are not limited to:

- Instillation of ocular pharmaceutical agents
- Insertion, removal and manipulation of contact lenses
- Assessment of blood pressure and pulse
- Removal of foreign objects from the cornea
- Simultaneous manipulation of lenses, instruments and therapeutic agents and devices
- Reasonable facility of movement

- Injections into the eye, lids or limbs

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative

Problem solving, a most critical skill, is essential for optometric students and must be performed quickly, especially in emergency situations. In order to be an effective problem solver, the student must be able to accurately and efficiently utilize such abilities as measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, judgment, investigation, memory, numerical recognition, and synthesis. Examples of these abilities include being able to:

- Determine appropriate questions to be asked and clinical tests to be performed
- Identify and analyze significant findings from history, examination and other test data
- Demonstrate good judgment and provide a reasonable assessment, diagnosis and management of patients
- Retain, recall and obtain information in an efficient manner
- Identify and communicate the limits of one's knowledge and skill

Behavioral and Social

The student must possess the necessary behavioral and social attributes for the study and practice of optometry. Examples of such attributes include:

- Satisfactory emotional health required for full utilization of one's intellectual ability
- High ethical standards and integrity
- An empathy with patients and concern for their welfare
- Commitment to the optometric profession and its standards
- Effective interpersonal relationships with patients, peers and instructors
- Professional demeanor
- Effective functioning under varying degrees of stress and workload
- Adaptability to changing environments and uncertainties
- Positive acceptance of suggestions and constructive criticism