What does it mean to be Pre-Optometry at WWU?

Pre-Optometry students are those who identify themselves as such, formally or informally with Pre-Healthcare Advising. Western does not offer a "Pre-Optometry" major, and there is no formula for getting into optometry school. Selection committees evaluate applicants across multiple areas through a holistic review process. Important components include OAT score, GPA (both cumulative and science/math), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, community service, diversity awareness, and an interview, as well as background checks (including legal, conduct, and social records).

Pre-Optometry Education

Optometry schools vary somewhat in admission requirements. Research the schools of your choice to confirm all required courses. Schools do emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education giving you flexibility in planning your educational program around pre-optometry requirements. Use your undergraduate years to explore many academic fields, to develop basic skills and knowledge, to demonstrate expertise and to experience a field of study (major) of your choice. Align with a major in which you both excel and enjoy. While Biology and Chemistry are popular choices, majors of recent pre-healthcare students include Anthropology, Behavioral Neuroscience, Business, Kinesiology, Languages (i.e. Spanish), Psychology, and Fairhaven self-designed programs. Some pursue combined majors such as Anthropology/Biology, Biochemistry, and Cellular & Molecular Biology.

Core Courses

Regardless of your major, certain prerequisite courses expected by most schools include:

**CHEMISTRY** (a sequence of eight courses)

**NOTE:** It is imperative that students begin general chemistry as early in their program as possible

- General Chemistry series (includes labs): CHEM 121, 122, 123 [or Honors equivalent]
- Organic Chemistry lecture series: CHEM 351, 352, 353;
  - with two accompanying labs: 354 and either 355 or 356 (depending upon major)
- Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472

**BIOLOGY**

- General Biology series (includes labs): BIOL 204, 205, 206
- Additional courses under advisement to possibly include Microbiology and A&P

**PHYSICS**

- Physics series (includes labs): PHYS 114, 115, 116 [or PHYS 161, 162, 163 series]

**MATHEMATICS**

- Calculus: MATH 124, 125
- Statistics: MATH 240 [or major equivalent; i.e. BIOL 340 for Biology majors]

**OTHER (NON-SCIENCE)**

- Psychology: PSY 101 and either 210 or 220
- 1-2 English composition courses: ENG 101 plus select from 201, 202, 301, or 302

This document is for preliminary advising purposes only.

Keep informed

- WWU students may join the Advisor’s Pre-optometry Listserv. To join, e-mail Renee.Murray@wwu.edu or Anna.Tognazzini@wwu.edu with the following SUBJECT information: Pre-optometry listserv, Last name, First name, WWU student number, and major (if declared).
- Pre-Optometry Club: Join this and other WWU Associated Students clubs at www.as.wwu.edu/clubs/.

Contact Information

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- Call 360-650-4240
  Old Main 280

Pre-Healthcare Professions Advising Website:

www.wwu.edu/careers/prehealth.shtml

2017-2018

WWU is an equal opportunity institution
Notes

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP): Check with targeted schools whether they recognize AP as college-earned credit. Not all do. It is better to view any earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as “testing out” of prerequisites.

DECLARING A MAJOR: Departments vary in how to declare majors. Behavioral Neuroscience, Biology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, and others allow students to declare as a “pre-major” while addressing their specified prerequisites. Some majors require a specific GPA across foundational courses. Declare early, even as a “pre-major”, to help shorten your time to degree. While working on any pre-major content, explore many disciplines to keep your options open.

ACCESS TO CLASSES: High volume student demand exists for upper-division courses, especially in the sciences. Many departments grant enrollment priority to students declared in specific majors over those seeking enrollment for professional school purposes. Registration access procedures for impacted courses can change, and departments commonly provide procedural updates through websites, seminars, and email notifications.

REPEATING/DROPPING COURSES: Regardless of Western’s policies, which are provided in the university catalog, https://catalog.wwu.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=2750, these actions are not generally viewed favorably by professional schools. Whereas Western may calculate the most recent repeated course into its GPA, some professional schools will average all grades earned for a course. While an isolated case may be acceptable, it will likely require an explanation on your application. Discuss your options first with a Pre-Healthcare Advisor. Be mindful both dropping and repeating courses can have an impact on eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and athletic participation as well. Consult advisors in each area that applies to you when making your decision.

SHADOWING: Students should gain shadowing experience with a non-relative optometrist to develop awareness of the profession and generate a professional letter of recommendation. Discuss your shadowing options with Pre-healthcare advisors.

OAT: The Optometry Admission Test is administered year round at Prometric test sites. Applicants typically take the exam within the year preceding anticipated admission. OAT information is available at www.ada.org/en/oat.

Additional Resources

WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth
WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO): www.opted.org
American Optometric Association (AOA): www.aoa.org
Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

Pre-Healthcare Advising Events

Typical programming events offered by Pre-Healthcare Advising include (but are not limited to):

Fall:
Orientation Session: Getting you from WWU to professional school (EYE DOC)
Health Professional School & Grad School Info Fair, October 19, 2017
Winter 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): Nov 15 (10am-1pm); Nov 16 (3-5pm)

Winter:
Kaplan-sponsored practice OAT

Spring 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): Feb 28 (12-3pm); March 1 (2-4pm)

Spring:
The Healthcare Professional School Application: A session overviewing the process
Fall 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): May 16 (12-3pm); May 17 (2-4pm)

This document is for preliminary advising purposes only. Contact Advising for Pre-Healthcare Professions for updates and changes.