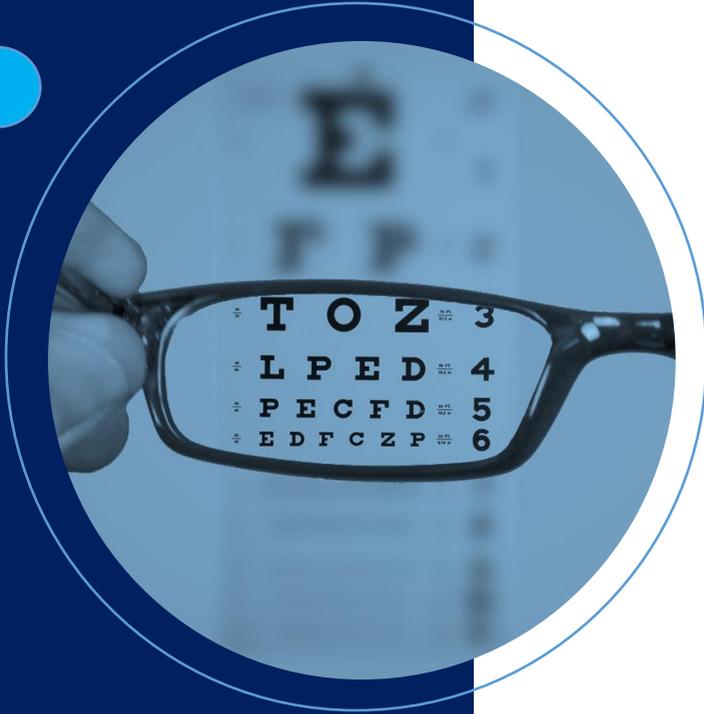




Muslim Medical Association of Canada



University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision: Admission Guide

2020 Edition

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ
شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ

Allah removed you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect [19:48]



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INTRODUCTION

Disclaimer: The following document is meant to serve as a guide for students hoping to enter optometry school. Although we have tried to create a comprehensive guide containing admission requirements, this document is not official and is not endorsed by the University of Waterloo, so it is important to conduct your own research. Please keep in mind that advice provided by applicants are personal and are coming from their point of view, so they may not be the most representative views coming from their colleagues.

All praise is due to Allah, the Creator, the Source of Guidance, and the Source of Knowledge. He is the one who brings the living from the dead and brings death to the living, and to Him is our return. May His blessings and peace be upon the best of human beings, the one endowed with the most wisdom and the best of character, our Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah sallallahu alaihi wa sallam.

The eyes are one of the most cherished human organs. Many ahadeeth narrate advice given by the Prophet SAW on taking care of the eyes, including eating melons to clear eyesight (attributed to Ibn Abbas), drinking truffle soup as a remedy for eye infections (narrated in Bukhari and Muslim) and using aloe to heal swollen eyelids (narrated by Uthman ibn Affan). In another hadith narrated by Abu Daw'ud and at-Tirmidhi, the prophet SAW said, "The best of all eye-medicines is antimony. It glorifies the sight and makes the eyelashes grow."

Surat An-Nahl describes the human as being born from the womb not knowing a thing and then being granted vision, hearing and intelligence (ayah 48). Vision and eyesight are gifts from Allah SWT that grant us the ability to learn and explore. In fact, those who exhibit patience when

afflicted with blindness are compensated for them in Jannah (Sahih Bukhari 5329). This only emphasizes the preciousness of the gift of eyesight. There is great reward then, for the doctor that helps preserve such a precious gift.

We want to welcome you to the exciting profession of optometry! We have put together this guide as an overview of the different academic and non-academic requirements needed for entry into Canada's only English-speaking optometry school, the University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Sciences.

REMEMBER TO BE STRONG!

The whole process of applying to professional schools, including optometry, can be a test of your tawakkul, or dependency on Allah SWT. Do your ultimate best and leave the rest to Him. Be confident that He will do the best for you!

"The Messenger of Allah SAW) said: ... Strive for that which will benefit you, seek the help of Allah, and do not feel helpless. If anything befalls you, do not say, "if only I had done such and such" (things would have proceeded differently) rather say "Qaddara Allahu wa ma sha'a fa'ala (Allah has decreed and whatever he wills, He does)." ...

Sunan Ibn Majah
English reference: Vol. 1, Book 1,
Hadith 79
Arabic reference : Book 1, Hadith 83

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Degree Requirements

- Three or more years of a Bachelor of Science Degree
- Minimum university average of 75% (full-course load required) *(Note: The actual averages of the students who have been admitted into the program over the past few years has been between 79% - 92%)*

Pre-requisite Courses

Humanities

- English (1)
- Ethics (1)
- Psychology (1)

Sciences

- Biology (2)
- Microbiology (1)
- Physiology (2)
- Chemistry with lab (1)
- Biochemistry (1)
- Organic chemistry (1)
- Physics with lab (2)

Math

- Calculus (1)
- Statistics (1)

NON-ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

a) Optometry Admission Test (OAT)

- Minimum score needed: 300/400. *(Note: Actual average score of 2019 applicants was 370). You must achieve at least 300 on each section, or else you will not be considered for the program.*
- Resources
 - Kaplan OAT
 - OAT Destroyer
 - Crack the Oat software

b) CASPer

- Online timed test which assesses non-cognitive and interpersonal skills such as collaboration, empathy, equity, ethics, motivation, problem-solving, professionalism, resilience, and self-awareness
- Learn more at: <https://takecasper.com/>

c) Confidential Assessment Forms (references)

- Two are needed, (1) Optometrist reference - must have shadowed for at least 8 hours, (2) Character reference from employer/supervisor/professor etc.

d) Citizenship

- Must be a Canadian citizen OR a resident who has resided in Canada for at least 12 months prior to the start date of the first year of optometry school

e) English Language Requirements

- If English is not the applicant's first language, then he or she must submit results from one of the following tests TOEFL, ILETS, or MELAB

f) Non-academic Application Section

- List any academic awards, non-academic awards, work experience, and volunteer experience

g) Police Record Check (with vulnerable sector check)



USEFUL FACTS/ADVICE

COURSES/ACADEMICS

- Microbiology and physiology tend to be third year courses, so plan your undergraduate degree accordingly. For example, considering the optometry program requires quite a few prerequisites, you may be better off doing a minor or even a major in something with biology, as all these prerequisites (for optometry) will likely make it easy to complete such a program. It will also give you priority when you have to join these courses during your undergraduate degree, so you will never have to worry about getting waitlisted for them.
- The Waterloo optometry program allows you to exempt 2 courses in your entire optometry degree. What this means is if there is a course in the optometry program that you have already taken during your undergraduate degree, you may be eligible to not have to take that course during your optometry degree. A common course that is an example of this is human anatomy. It is not a prerequisite for the optometry program but it is a course you can get exempted from your optometry program, which can make things slightly easier for you during your optometry program.
- Waterloo's Optometry school does NOT look at your GPA, rather it looks at your overall average. This is something that works in your advantage as GPA's tend to be much harder to change than your overall average. Remember, even if you don't do too well on a course during your undergraduate degree, don't freak out! Just try balancing out the bad mark with a good one and you should be fine!

SHADOWING

- When it comes to shadowing, try to split up your hours between places. For example, if you aim to have 20 hours of shadowing, instead of doing 10 hours with 2 different optometrists, try finding 5 optometrists who are willing to give you 4 hours each. This will not only give you a more diverse experience, but also allow you to have more experiences listed on your application.

CASPer

- The CASPer test is something you are told you cannot prepare for but that is not 100% true. While it is a test that isn't very standardized, you can help improve your chances of doing well by doing things like practicing your typing (you have a very short amount of time to type out responses during the test so speed is one of your greatest weapons) and perhaps reading a book or two on ethics. There are even courses to help you do well on the CASPer exam, so don't feel like it's something you cant prepare for!

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Watch out for deadlines! One of the reasons I personally believe the optometry application pool tend to be small at Waterloo is because people don't realize how strict the deadlines tend to be and miss them. Application dates for optometry schools in the United States tend to be much later (some even allow you to apply up until april!) but Waterloo has everything due quite early on so be wary of the dates!

TYPES OF APPLICANTS

- Finally, don't feel like you have to be the perfect applicant to apply! A Lot of people feel like Waterloo's Optometry school (like many other professionals schools) is impossible to get into, especially considering there is only one English speaking optometry school in the whole country. This is not true! While it may seem daunting considering you have to have so many academic and non-academic requirements, understand that this actually works in your favor! If one section of your application is weak (let's say you OAT score is subpar), you can balance it out with something else (perhaps your extracurriculars or average could be on good terms). Also keep in mind that the applicant pool isn't even very large to begin with. The applicant pool size in 2018 was 260 and there were 90 spots available. That means just by applying you would have over a 33% chance of getting in! Give it your best shot and inshAllah Allah will do what's best for you in this life and the afterlife!

Contact Information

If you have any other questions, feel free to contact these past graduates and current students:

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