

Doctor of Optometry - Statement of Inherent Requirements

School	Allied Health
Disciplines	Discipline of Optometry
Courses	Postgraduate Course – Commencing 2021 Doctor of Optometry

All students in the UWA Doctor of Optometry program must possess the cognitive, ethical, physical and mental capabilities required to participate in the intensive curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence at graduation required by the University of Western Australia. Optometry programs provide graduates with the knowledge, skills and attributes required to practice the full scope of optometry in Australia and New Zealand. This document is prepared with direct references to Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ)¹ and Optometry Board of Australia (OBA), which require all optometry graduates, meet the prescribed professional competencies.

Before being offered a place into the UWA optometry program, students with existing disabilities may be asked to provide independent medical and/or clinical assessments of the conditions, on the possible impact of successfully completing the program. The reports would be treated in confidence with only those on the admissions committee and relevant SAH management team (according to UWA governance and procedures). UWA will undertake reasonable steps to minimise barriers towards the successful completion of the optometry program, and make reasonable adjustments to enable students' participation in the learning activities over the three years of the program. It is a requirement of the program that students will regularly perform clinical procedures on each other over the duration of their study.

All enrolled students need to participate fully in all online and physical learning activities and to successfully fulfil the rigorous assessment (didactic and skill-based) components of the course. UWA is committed to making reasonable adjustments for students to compensate for disabilities impacting their participation in the program. It is important that students with adjustments do not prevent them from providing a primary duty of care to the patients in the clinical training environment.

UWA has enacted the following eight inherent requirements²⁻⁶ that an enrolled student must comply with:

1. Ethical Behaviour
2. Legal Compliance
3. Communication Skills
4. Behavioural Stability
5. Motor Skills (Mobility, Gross and Fine)
6. Sensory Skills
7. Cognitive Skills
8. Sustainable Performance

1. Ethical Behaviour

Inherent Requirement

- Displaying ethical and professional behaviour in academic and professional settings, complying with relevant standards and codes of ethics of the health care profession.
 - a. Optometry Australia Code of Ethics
 - b. Optometry Board of Australia Code of Conduct for Optometrists

Rationale

- Compliance with ethical and professional behaviour in academic and professional settings will bring about a safe and conducive learning environment for interactions between students and UWA academic and professional staff. This supports the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of everyone.

Examples

- Demonstrate ethical behaviour with proper and discreet communication of patient clinical data in the academic settings and clinical training, and extend the confidentiality beyond the UWA clinical settings.
- Demonstrate the use of appropriate and ethical management skills for the wellbeing of patients.

2. Legal Compliance

Inherent Requirement

- Legal compliance with Australian and WA Law, UWA Legislative instruments, professional regulations and/or scope of practice relevant to the profession.

Rationale

- Recognising the legal framework in the knowledge, understanding and compliance with Australian and WA Law, and professional regulations, is essential towards the clinical training of effective, professional, responsible and accountable optometrists, and fulfilling the legislated national law and professional registration requirements. For example,
 - a. Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2010 (WA)
 - b. Compliance with the UWA Information Privacy Policy and Guidelines, which complies with Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles.
 - c. UWA (Student Conduct) Rules
 - d. Optometric Competency Australia New Zealand (OCANZ) Standards¹
 - e. Optometry Board of Australia Entry Level Registration Standards (Competency Standards)
 - f. OCANZ Accreditation Manual for Postgraduate Programs of Study in Ocular Therapeutics – Part 2 Standards (August 2013)

Examples

- Understand the relevance of privacy and confidential information protection about patients under the legal requirements.
- Having the necessary skills to communicate about the need to obtain informed consent for the care to be delivered to vulnerable and young patients.
- Know the legislative obligations to practice within the optometry standards of competence and its scope of practice.
- Understand the continuing professional development requirements in order to maintain professional registration with Australian Health Practitioner Registration Agency (AHPRA).

3. Communication Skills
A. Expressive Communication Skills
<p>Inherent Requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting the standard required to communicate effectively, that provides clear, coherent and professional-level of knowledge sharing and outward delivery of patient-centric clinical information appropriate to the audience.
<p>Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency in expressive communication skills in academic learning and clinical settings are required to enable transparent and effective transfer of knowledge and information between students, academics, patients and health care professionals, resulting in trusting relationships. Communication skills can be in verbal, non-verbal or written formats.
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the ability for students to deliver coherent and logical communication (verbal, non-verbal or written) to academics required for the volume of learning. Demonstrate the ability for students to synthesize and articulate a summary of a patient’s clinical findings. Actively participate in learning environment with considered and informed discussions e.g. PBL seminars on differential diagnosis of a case.
B. Receptive Language Skills
<p>Inherent Requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting the standard required to internally evaluate abstract and conceptual meaning in English (with the elements of critical thinking skills), that provides a coherent understanding of knowledge received and making appropriate clinical decisions.
<p>Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency in receptive communication skills in academic learning and clinical settings are required to enable effective reception of knowledge and information, and to provide suitable interpretations to the transferred knowledge and information. Communication skills can be in verbal, non-verbal or written formats.
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to understand and interpreting information presented in clinical practice such as handwritten notes, test results, charts and computerized outputs. Ability to comprehend spoken English delivered at conversational speed (including in non-clinical settings such as social and school environments). Ability to comprehend and contribute during tutorial, laboratory, seminar, clinical and placement discussions.
C. Interpersonal Communication Skills
<p>Inherent Requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using verbal, non-verbal or written formats to communicate with others, including the ability to listen, display empathy, show respect, build rapport and gain trust to ensure meaningful and effective engagements in clinical and non-clinical settings.

Rationale

- Strong interpersonal communication skills in academic learning and clinical settings are desirable to provide trusting and highly effective working environment. Communication skills can be in verbal, non-verbal or written formats.

Examples

- Providing the necessary respectful communications with people of different gender, sexual orientations and age, and from diverse cultural, languages, religious, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.
- Ability to develop rapport with peers, academic and professional staff conducive to effective learning and working relationships e.g. PBL group learning seminars.
- Putting into practice the learned cultural competence, displaying the sensitivity and willingness to work with others in the diverse Australian educational and clinical settings.
- Ability to ask for patients' consent for procedures that may intrude on their personal space or involve physical contact. For example, during direct and indirect ophthalmoscopy.
- Dutifully maintaining good personal hygiene and dressing professionally in a clinical setting to promote patient confidence and comfort.
- Displaying the sensitivity towards nonverbal communication including patient distress, mood swings and posture.
- Maintaining appropriate neutral facial expression, eye contact, postures and personal space.

4. Behavioural Stability

Inherent Requirement

- Displaying flexible and adaptable behaviours to effectively manage fluid situations to maintain the required academic and professional standards and codes of conducts.

Rationale

- Recognising behavioural stability is critical in managing emotional responses and behaviour in academic and complex professional environments, particularly in situations with heightened human emotions. Health care providers are required to work in culturally and socially diverse settings, and to manage challenging work places, tight timelines in clinical appointments and difficult patients.

Examples

- Ability to be receptive and respond appropriately to constructive feedback from patients and tutors.
- Managing own emotions and behaviour in the academic environment and clinical settings. For example, being empathetic and supportive when breaking bad news or remaining calm, open and receptive when dealing with conflicts or complaints.
- Seeking personal and professional support (e.g. mental health first aid) when needed.

5. Motor Skills (Mobility, Gross and Fine)

Inherent requirement

- Having the required dexterity and effective tactile function, freedom of joint movements, strength and mobility to safety function and practice within the scope of optometry practice.

Rationale

- Optometry requires the mobility, gross and fine motor functions to consistently deliver timely, safe and effective eyecare services to minimise the risk of harm to self and others, especially in a clinical setting.

Examples

- Demonstrate the ability to perform a full optometric examination on any gender or age, including detection of abnormalities by observation, measurement, manipulation and palpation, in an appropriate timeframe.
- Moving seamlessly around the patient examination chair in the examination room without obstructions. For example, manipulating the phoropter for refraction, moving sideways or alongside the patient's line of sight while performing retinoscopy, and interchangeably placing and retrieving ophthalmic lenses while performing trial frame subjective refraction.
- Demonstrate the use of a variety of complex ophthalmic instruments to take ocular measurements and observations. For example, holding a condensing lens in front of the patient's eye whilst simultaneously operating a slit lamp biomicroscope to examine the eye. In binocular indirect ophthalmoscopy, students are required to hold a condensing lens in an upright position (while the patient lies prone) to examine the retina. Fine motor skills are required for the delicate task of foreign body removal procedure.
- Ability to efficiently and effectively manipulate, insert and remove contact lenses or instill eye drops.
- Completing a written record card or prescription, or fill out details on the computer.
- Ability to complete clinical placements in a range of clinical settings (including regional, rural and remote) to meet the requirement to register as an optometrist.

6. Sensory Skills

Inherent requirement

- Adequate level of sensorimotor skill requirements, including visual, auditory and tactile acuity, to physically manage patients within the optometry scope of practice.

Rationale

- Eye care practitioners require visual, auditory and tactile acuity to consistently provide safe, efficient and effective eyecare in order to minimise the risk of harm to self and others.

Examples

- Ability to instruct, perform, observe and interpret information from a range of essential optometry clinical equipment, such as ophthalmoscopes, slit lamps, and contact tonometers. For example, using a direct ophthalmoscope to detect a retinal bleed in wet age-related macular degeneration.
- Ability to instruct, perform, manipulate and interpret information from a range of supplementary optometry clinical tests such as automated perimetry, corneal topography and optical coherence tomography.

7. Cognitive Skills

Inherent Requirement

- The complex neural tasks of acquiring knowledge, process information, formulate, analyse, think critically and synthesise information to apply knowledge of the discipline, in order to meet learning outcomes and academic standards pertinent to the course.
- Cognitive skills encompass cognitive, numeracy and literacy skills.

Rationale

- Cognitive skills, including maintaining focus, memory and attention to detail, are essential elements in the acquisition, interpretation and application of knowledge (in both the academic and professional settings).

Examples

- Ability to receive, comprehend, interpret, formulate and synthesize existing and new information through the substantial volume of learning.
- For example
 - Eye diseases relating to ocular structures and functions.
 - Information outputs from instruments and techniques, such as automated perimetry, corneal topography and optical coherence tomography.
 - Measuring and recording visual acuity to chart or monitor changes overtime.
 - Measuring refractive errors, near accommodation and binocular status during an eye examination.
 - Knowledge needed to prescribe appropriate visual appliances such as spectacles, contact lenses or low vision devices.
 - Integrating the information from ocular parameters including corneal topography, keratometry, tear film, ocular surface and lid aperture, to prescribe soft, hard or scleral contact lenses.
 - Working within the scope of optometric practice to make the correct diagnosis, and if required, to prescribe the appropriate ocular pharmaceutical agents to manage the ocular condition; and to schedule follow up visits to monitor the patient's response to treatment.
 - Making the clinical decision to refer, and/or co-manage patients, with the other health care practitioners to ensure the best outcomes for patients.
 - Engaging critical thinking skills through research projects

8. Sustainable Performance

Inherent requirements

- The ability to consistently perform the required eye examinations and complete given tasks in a timely manner with satisfactory outcomes, while maintaining consistency and quality of performance.

Rationale

- Optometrists operate within an engaging environment where physical and mental endurance is a critical success factor when performing multiple tasks in a designated period of time, with the goal of providing safe and effective care. The wellbeing of students, academic and professional staff, supervising practitioners, and patients is essential.

Examples

- Maintaining the academic focus and performing consistently over the duration of the accelerated course.
- Demonstrate the ability to complete all facets of the training requirements outlined in the UWA optometry course handbook.
- Having the energy to perform multiple tasks with a level of concentration that ensures the capacity to focus on the activities until completion e.g. final year clinical placements.
- Managing the assigned academic and non-academic workload to deliver safe and effective eye care services in a timely manner.

Source of Reference

1. Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand - Accreditation Standards and Evidence Guide for Entry-Level Optometry Programs Part 2 – Standards (1 January 2017)
2. University of Canberra – Bachelor of vision Science (Statements of Inherent Requirements)
3. University of Melbourne – Doctor of Optometry (Inherent Requirements)
4. University Technology of Sydney – Graduate School of Health – Orthoptics (Inherent Requirement Statements)
5. Medical Deans ANZ – Inherent requirements for studying medicine in Australia and New Zealand (July 2017)
6. University of Newcastle – Inherent requirements for Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine – Joint Medical Program (JMP)