

Optical Sciences Program FAQ

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What are the entrance requirements?

For the **Eyeglasses Program**, applicants must be working in an optical dispensary and have a qualified preceptor who is willing and able to supervise the clinical (practicum) training, have a Canadian High School Diploma or [the assessed equivalent](#), and have [proof of English Language Proficiency \(ELP\)](#). A qualified preceptor is someone who is a Licensed Optician, Optometrist, or Ophthalmologist.

For the **Contact Lens Program**, applicants must be a Licensed Optician in good standing with their provincial regulatory body, must be working in an optical dispensary and have a qualified preceptor who is willing and able to supervise the clinical (practicum) training, and have [proof of English Language Proficiency \(ELP\)](#). A qualified preceptor is someone who is a Licensed Contact Lens Optician, Optometrist, or Ophthalmologist. Additionally, applicants must have graduated from the Eyeglasses Program in 2015 or a subsequent year. Students who graduated prior to 2015, will be required to successfully complete a prerequisite course, Eye Health and Screening (OPSC615).

- OPSC615 is an eight-week course offered entirely online. The tuition cost is \$500.00 (excluding textbooks). The pass mark for this course is 77%. This course has four intakes: April 1st, May 1st, June 1st, and July 1st. Students registered in the July intake will need to complete the course within four (4) weeks from the start date, in order to meet the application deadline for the Contact Lens Program. If a student registered in the July intake misses the application deadline, then their mark will be valid for one (1) year. For the OPSC615 application form and textbook list, please [visit our website](#). Alternatively, you are welcome to email optical@nait.ca to request the application form.

Can I still apply if I don't have a job yet?

Without a completed Contract of Practicum, your application package will be considered incomplete, and we will not be able to process your application until such time as all the entrance requirements are met.

Can you help me find a job as a student optician?

It is the applicant's responsibility to find a job as a student optician, but we can recommend a couple job boards that may aid you in your job search:

- Jobs 4 ECPs: <https://www.jobs4ecps.ca/>
- NAIT Student Job Search: <https://mynait.nait.ca/job-search.htm>

I am an employer seeking to hire a student optician, can you advertise this position on my behalf?

The Program Office does not advertise on behalf of employers, but we can recommend a couple job boards that may aid you in your recruitment:

- Jobs 4 ECPs: <https://www.jobs4ecps.ca/>
- NAIT Employer Services: <https://nait-csm.symplicity.com/employers/index.php>

Can I apply if I'm only working part-time?

Eyeglasses students must collect a minimum 500 hours under the direct supervision of their preceptor per clinical level/semester. Contact Lens students must collect a minimum 250 hours under the direct supervision of their preceptor per clinical level/semester.

Please be advised that clinical hours do not necessarily equate to hours a student is scheduled to work and/or required breaks, as per employment standards. Clinical hours are when a student is performing optical-related tasks under the supervision of their preceptor(s).

Historically, it has been a challenge for students who are working part-time to complete the clinical component by the due date, but it is not impossible. To bolster your success in the program, you will need to be working under your preceptor's supervision for at least 25 hours a week.

Can I have more than one preceptor (supervisor)?

Student opticians may have up to two (2) preceptors on file, and preceptors may supervise up to two (2) student opticians.

Can I start counting my clinical hours in the summer?

The soonest you can start counting your clinical hours is August 1st or the effective date of your Contract of Practicum, if the effective date is after August 1st.

What are the program costs and fees?

The following information pertains to students with practicums located in Alberta. If your practicum is located outside of Alberta, then please [contact the Opticians Association of Canada \(OAC\)](#), as they have different fees.

For the 2019/2020 academic year, [credit Eyeglasses courses](#) are priced at \$81.00 per credit, and [credit Contact Lens courses](#) are priced at \$180.00 per credit, with a tuition cap of \$1,940.00.

Additionally, students enrolled in a credit program are assessed the following credit student fees:

NAITSA fee: \$129.00

Medical fee: \$128.00

Athletics fee: \$70.00

U-Pass fee: \$175.00

The NAITSA fee is mandatory. No student is eligible to opt out of the NAITSA fee. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are eligible to opt out of the Medical fee, Athletics fee, and/or the U-Pass fee. If you determine that you are eligible to opt out, then it is your responsibility to opt out by the deadline. **Failure to opt out by the deadline will result in the student having to pay the fee(s) – no exceptions.**

In cases when a student successfully completes the clinical portion but is repeating the theory portion of the program, the student must pay the clinical renewal fee of \$150.00. NAIT will alert the Alberta College and Association of Opticians (ACAO) to recognize this student as having continued student optician status under the supervision of a qualified preceptor. Should a student drop or withdraw from the theory portion, the clinical renewal fee is non-refundable.

Do I need to pay for the student fees, even if I will not be using the services?

You are required to pay the Athletics fee, U-Pass fee, and Medical fee, if you do not meet the opt-out criteria. If you meet the opt-out criteria but neglect to opt out of the fee(s) by the deadline, then you are required to pay the fee(s).

Opt-Out Criteria

Athletics fee: Practicum students who reside outside Edmonton and do not commute can apply for exemption. This fee is assessed in the fall and winter terms, and you will need to **opt out twice** if you are enrolled in both terms. For more information about this fee, please [refer to the NAIT website](#).

U-Pass fee: Students on practicum eight (8) weeks or longer from September 1st to December 31st for the fall term, January 1st to April 30th for the winter term, AND are placed outside the service area of Edmonton, Strathcona County, St. Albert, Leduc, Spruce Grove, and Fort Saskatchewan can apply for exemption. This fee is assessed in the fall and winter terms, and you will need to **opt out twice** if you are enrolled in both terms. For more information about this fee, please [refer to the NAITSA website](#).

Medical fee: If you have comparable coverage through another insurance carrier, you can apply for exemption. This fee is assessed in the fall and winter terms, but there is **just one opt-out deadline**. If you miss the opt-out deadline, then you will need to pay for both terms, as no exceptions are made if the deadline is missed. For more information about this fee, please [refer to the NAITSA website](#).

It is the student's responsibility to determine whether they are eligible to opt out of any of the aforementioned fees and to opt out by the deadline. If your request for exemption is successfully submitted, then you will receive a confirmation email. If you did not receive a confirmation email, then check your spam folder. If you cannot find your confirmation email anywhere, then it means your request for exemption did not go through and you will need to try again.

Please note that **all requests for exemption are audited**; they are not processed automatically. Do not be alarmed if the fee remains on your account for a few days or weeks. As long as you received an email confirming that your exemption request was received, then you may disregard the outstanding fee(s).

If you are experiencing technical difficulties when opting out, then contact the office(s) that assess the fee(s) for assistance. The Optical Sciences Program Office does NOT assess these fees. If you have questions regarding the NAITSA fee, Medical fee, or U-Pass fee, please [contact the NAIT Students' Association \(NAITSA\)](#); questions about the Athletics Fee should be directed to the [Student Service Centre \(SSC\)](#).

Are textbooks and supplies included in my tuition?

Tuition does not include the cost of textbooks or supplies. The textbook and supply list is on the last page of the application package. Textbooks and supplies may be purchased from the [NAIT Bookstore](#). If you purchase your textbooks elsewhere, such as Amazon or Chapters, then please ensure that you are buying the same edition on the textbook list.

For Eyeglasses Year One, the cost of textbooks and supplies is approximately \$400.00.

For Eyeglasses Year Two, you will continue to use the textbooks and calculator you purchased for Year One. The cost of your additional textbook is approximately \$126.00.

For Contact Lens, the cost of textbooks is approximately \$650.00. Two of the required Contact Lens textbooks are also used in Eyeglasses Year Two, so if you kept them, then the overall cost will be reduced by approximately \$180.00. You may use the same calculator you used in the Eyeglasses Program. If you need to purchase a new calculator, the cost is approximately \$20.00. For pricing on the RGP Fitting Kit, please contact [Viscon](#) or a supplier of your choice.

Is funding available?

Yes! In November 2018, Student Aid Alberta re-designated the NAIT Optical Sciences Eyeglasses and Contact Lens Programs for full-time and part-time funding. The programs are now designated for full-time and part-time Canada Student Loans. For more information, please refer to the following links:

<https://studentaid.alberta.ca/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/education/student-financial-aid/student-loan.html>

I studied high school in Canada but did not achieve my diploma. Can I still apply?

If your practicum location is in Alberta, please contact the Program Office by calling 780-378-2800 (toll-free 1-888-491-3130) to discuss your options.

If your practicum location is outside of Alberta, please contact the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) by calling 204-982-6060 (toll-free 1-800-847-3155) to discuss your options.

Am I subject to the English Language Proficiency (ELP) requirement?

Applicants who confirm through transcripts that they have successfully completed three full-time consecutive years of academic studies (excluding ESL courses) where the language of instruction was English do not need to provide further proof of ELP.

Full-time study for ELP purposes is defined as successfully completing three courses per term for six terms over a span of three (3) years.

If an applicant has completed three (3) years of full-time, consecutive academic studies (excluding ESL courses) where the language of instruction was in English from a country **not included** on the [list of exempt countries](#), then additional information is required. In these cases, NAIT requires a letter from the education institute stating that the language of instruction for a specific period of time was English and meets the following requirements:

- The letter must show the actual start and end dates of study.
- The letter must show successful completion of study for three (3) or more consecutive years.
- The letter must be on official educational institution letterhead.
- The letter must be signed and dated by an official at the education institute.

If an applicant is unable to meet the ELP requirement through proof of previous academic study, then a formal assessment is required. Exams are valid for two (2) years after the test date. To see accepted exams and required scores for this program, please [follow this link](#), scroll to the bottom of the page, and then select "All other NAIT Programs."

Effective October 1, 2016, submitted documents and/or assessments that had been previously completed are now subject to review under the current ELP guidelines.

Please be advised that NAIT reserves the right to request additional proof of ELP for any applicant.

My ELP test is scheduled after the application deadline. Can I submit a partially-complete application package and submit my test score later?

You are welcome to submit your application package prior to your ELP test; however, without sufficient proof of ELP, your application package will be considered incomplete, and we will not be able to process your application until such time as all the entrance requirements are met.

My friend applied to the program a few years ago and didn't have to provide proof of English Language Proficiency (ELP). Why do I have to provide it?

Policies and guidelines may evolve over time, in the interest of student success. Prior to the 2014/2015 academic year, the Optical Sciences Program was not subject to the ELP requirement, so perhaps it was not a requirement when your friend applied to the program years ago. Furthermore, some countries that were previously exempt from this requirement are no longer exempt, so it is possible that your friend's application was accepted because the country in which they previously studied was exempt from this requirement at the time.

Do you accept International students? What does an International student require in order to apply?

This program can only accept persons already employed in the Optical field. As such, any foreign national wanting to be admitted into this program must hold a valid work permit issued by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). There are three valid work permit categories:

- [Temporary Foreign Worker Program](#): Eligible foreign nationals may be issued a work permit on the basis of a valid labour market impact assessment (LMIA).
- [International Experience Canada \(IEC\)](#): Eligible participants in the IEC program may obtain a work permit without having to apply for an LMIA. If the participant is not able to secure authorization to work for more than one (1) year in Canada, then the participant is responsible for securing additional authorization to work in Canada through other IRCC work permit programs.
- [Post-Graduation Work Permit Program \(PGWPP\)](#): Eligible participants may obtain a work permit after graduating from a Canadian Designated Learning Institution without having to apply for an LMIA.

Since, by definition, distance learning does not require one to be in Canada, IRCC will not issue study permits or co-op work permits for this program.

International students with one of the three aforementioned valid work permits are eligible to apply for this program. *In addition to proof of the valid work permit, you will need to submit:* a complete paper application package, [IQAS results](#), [proof of ELP](#), and a letter of recommendation from your supervisor. The letter of recommendation should indicate how long you have been working there, why that person feels you would be successful in our program, and anything else they would like to say about you.

When is the deadline to apply?

Fall intake application packages are to be submitted no later than August 1st, and winter intake application packages are to be submitted no later than December 1st.

Why is the deadline to submit the application package different from the application deadline on your website?

Due to the steps involved in the application process, fall intake application packages are to be submitted no later than August 1st, and winter intake application packages are to be submitted no later than December 1st. The application deadline on our website is the very last day that applicants in Alberta can finalize their application through APAS.

Since the application deadline on our website coincides with the program start date, we strongly encourage applicants to submit their application packages by the deadline stated on the application package.

Alberta students: If you finalize your application through APAS after the tuition payment deadline, then full payment of your tuition and applicable student fees will be due within 24 hours of registration – ***no exceptions***.

Can you send me an application package?

If your practicum location is in Alberta, then please email optical@nait.ca to request an application package. Please note, the application package for Alberta students is available to download from our website.

If your practicum location is outside of Alberta, then please email education@opticians.ca to request an application package.

Is there a winter intake for Eyeglasses Year Two or Contact Lens?

Currently, there is just one intake – the fall intake – for Eyeglasses Year Two and the Contact Lens Program. The fall intake runs from the fall term through the winter term.

What is the average salary?

The average salary may vary from province to province; however, you may find the [Alis website](#) to be a helpful resource in your career investigation.

What is the difference between NAIT, OAC, ACAO, and NACOR?

NAIT is the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. We register students with practicums located in Alberta, hire the instructors, set up the programs and courses, mark your exams, post your grades, and issue certification.

OAC is the Opticians Association of Canada. They accept applications and payments from students with practicums located outside of Alberta, arrange labs and exams for those students, and mark those students' practicums.

ACAO is the Alberta College and Association of Opticians. They handle licensing in Alberta, mark the Alberta students' practicums, schedule and conduct field supervision visits, and they are with whom Alberta grads will register as provisional in order to apply for the national licensing exam.

NACOR is the National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators. The national licensing exams are facilitated by NACOR (not NAIT), though the exams that take place in Alberta may be held at NAIT.

I reside and work in Alberta. How do I apply?

Canadian residents who live and work in Alberta must first submit a complete paper application package to the Optical Sciences Program Office. We (the Program Office) will review your application package and, if it meets our eligibility criteria, we will email you an offer of conditional acceptance with instructions to finalize your application to the program through the Alberta Post-Secondary Application System (APAS).

The APAS application fee is \$115.00 and is *non-refundable*. **DO NOT APPLY THROUGH APAS UNLESS THE PROGRAM OFFICE INSTRUCTS YOU TO DO SO.** If you apply through APAS without first receiving conditional acceptance from the Program Office, and your application package does not meet our eligibility criteria, you will not receive a refund for the application fee.

After you have finalized your application through APAS, the Program Office will ask the Registrar's Office to accept you into the program. Within 2-5 business days after this request is made, you will receive an e-letter offering you a seat into the program. You may view this e-letter by logging into the MyNAIT Portal.

Please note: the e-letter from the Registrar's Office will invite you to enroll in your courses online. **This step does NOT apply to students in the Optical Sciences Program.** The Program Office will enroll you in your courses.

To accept your seat, you must pay a *non-refundable* tuition deposit of \$250.00 (\$1,000 for International students). The Program Office cannot enroll you in your courses until the deposit is paid. The deposit must be paid by the deadline displayed in the MyNAIT Portal; otherwise, your APAS application will be cancelled and you will be required to re-apply (and pay the application fee again). The tuition deposit will be applied to your first semester's tuition, once the Program Office enrolls you in your courses. After you accept your seat, it may take up to 24 hours for your deposit to appear in NAIT's system. Once the deposit appears in NAIT's system, the Program Office will enroll you in your courses and send you an email with further instructions.

I reside and work outside of Alberta. How do I apply?

DO NOT APPLY THROUGH APAS. IF YOU APPLY THROUGH APAS IN ERROR, YOUR APPLICATION FEE WILL NOT BE REFUNDED. Canadian residents who live and work outside of Alberta must contact the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) to apply for the NAIT Optical Sciences Eyeglasses and Contact Lens Programs. NAIT teaches these programs across Canada; however, the OAC handles the administration for students with practicum locations outside Alberta. To contact the OAC, please email education@opticians.ca or call 204-982-6060 (toll-free 1-800-847-3155).

I live in Lloydminster, AB, but I work in Lloydminster, SK. How do I apply?

DO NOT APPLY THROUGH APAS. Since your practicum location is in Saskatchewan, you will apply to the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC). To contact the OAC, please email education@opticians.ca or call 204-982-6060 (toll-free 1-800-847-3155).

I applied through APAS in error. Can I get a refund for the APAS application fee?

As our website clearly states that Alberta applicants should not apply through APAS unless instructed to do so by the Program Office, and OAC applicants should not apply through APAS at all, no refund will be issued if you apply through APAS in error.

Can you apply my APAS application fee towards a future intake?

The APAS application fee is non-refundable; it cannot be applied to a future intake.

Can I fax or email my Official Transcript? Will you accept an Unofficial Transcript and/or Statement of Marks in lieu of an Official Transcript?

We require your **original** Official High School Transcript (not your diploma; your transcript). We do not accept electronic copies.

Instructions on how to order an original copy of your Official Transcript (if you studied in Canada) are provided on page 1 of the application package.

What is the status of my application?

Please check your email for updates on the status of your application, as that is our primary method of communication. If there is no email in your inbox, then please check your spam folder. If there is still no email, and it has been more than two (2) business days after we received your application package, then please feel free to contact the Program Office (or the OAC, if your practicum location is outside of Alberta).

How do I pay the tuition deposit? If I change my mind after paying the deposit, can you apply it to a future intake?

The e-letter from the Registrar's Office will indicate how you may pay the deposit. As the tuition deposit is non-refundable, it cannot be applied to a future intake. OAC students do not pay a tuition deposit to NAIT, as they pay their tuition fees to the OAC.

I need a little bit more time to get my application package in order, can I get an extension on the application deadline?

Depending on what documentation is outstanding, extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

If you require an extension and your practicum location is in Alberta, please contact the Program Office by calling 780-378-2800 (toll-free 1-888-491-3130). If your practicum location is outside of Alberta, please contact the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) by calling 204-982-6060 (toll-free 1-800-847-3155).

I am trying to self-enroll online, but I'm receiving an error message saying "Department Consent Required." What does this mean?

Students in the Optical Sciences Program cannot self-enroll online. The Optical Sciences Program Office enrolls students into their course(s).

What forms of payment will NAIT accept?

You may pay with Interac Online or a credit card online by logging into the MyNAIT Portal. Once you have logged in, select **My Account > Payments** from the Dashboard, and click **Make a payment**. Please be advised that a 1.75% non-refundable convenience fee will be added to all credit card payments.

Other methods of payment that NAIT will accept are posted on the [NAIT website](#).

When is the deadline to pay tuition and applicable student fees? Can I get an extension?

Tuition payment deadlines are posted on the [NAIT website](#), and once you are enrolled in your courses, the deadlines will also be viewable in the MyNAIT Portal. These deadlines are strict; there are **no extensions**. Failure to make full payment by the deadline will result in your registration being cancelled and you will be required to re-apply to the program – **no exceptions**.

If you are eligible to opt out of any student fee(s), then you are not required to pay it/them; **HOWEVER, it is your responsibility to opt out of any student fees by the deadline**. If you miss the opt-out deadline, then you will be required to pay the fee(s). If you pay for any student fees that you are eligible to opt out of, then you must opt out by the deadline in order to receive a refund.

The tuition payment deadline is approaching and my funding application has not yet been approved. What should I do to prevent my registration from being cancelled?

In this case, it is in your best interest to contact the NAIT Financial Aid Office immediately to see if they can “flag” your account as funded. You may contact Financial Aid by calling 780-471-6248 (toll-free 1-877-3336248) or emailing financialaid@nait.ca.

If Financial Aid cannot flag your account as funded, then you will need to pay your tuition and applicable student fees by the tuition payment deadline, to prevent your registration from being cancelled while you wait for funding approval.

I am eligible to opt out of the U-Pass fee and need a letter from the program office confirming the location of my practicum in order to do so. Can you send me this letter?

If you are eligible to opt out of this fee, then you do not need to request this letter. Once we have enrolled you in your courses, we will prepare the letter confirming the location of your practicum.

Please refer to the email we sent you entitled “Application Processed; Tuition Fees Due,” as the letter is attached to that email. We recommend that you **keep a copy of this email** for the academic year, as it contains important information that you may need to refer back to.

The email I received says there is an attachment, but I can't see it. Where is it?

If you are using your phone to check your emails, please scroll to the very bottom of the email, as that is where email attachments are typically viewable on phones.

I was eligible to opt out of student fees, but I forgot to opt out by the deadline, can I still opt out?

Students who neglect to opt out by the deadline are required to pay the fee(s), even if they were eligible to opt out – **no exceptions**.

My address has changed since I submitted my application. Can I change my address?

If you have a NAIT ID, then you may log into the MyNAIT Portal to update your address. If you do not yet have a NAIT ID, then please notify our office of your new address by emailing optical@nait.ca.

I no longer wish to apply for this program. Can I get a refund?

The APAS application fee and tuition deposit are non-refundable. The deadline to withdraw from the program and receive a full refund less the tuition deposit and applicable administrative fees is posted in the MyNAIT Portal.

Can I change preceptors after school has started?

Yes, you can. You must notify the office **within 14 calendar days** when there is a change of preceptor, work location, or addition of a preceptor by faxing a new Contract of Practicum form to the Program Office (or to the OAC, if your practicum is outside of Alberta). If you are adding a second preceptor, then please indicate that on the form. If you are terminating a preceptor, then please fax a completed Termination of Supervision form to the Program Office (or OAC, if an OAC student).

Please note, the date on the contract must be current. We will not accept back-dated contracts. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form(s) are received by the Program Office (or OAC, if an OAC student).

What grades do I need to achieve in order to graduate? Am I licensed after I graduate?

In order to graduate from either the Eyeglasses Program or the Contact Lens Program, a minimum grade of 63% (standard C letter grade) must be achieved in each theory course and a grade of "Pass" must be achieved in each clinical level.

Graduating from the program does not mean that you are licensed; it means that you are eligible to apply for the national licensing exam (NACOR).

A license granted by the provincial regulatory body (College of Opticians) will allow Opticians and Contact Lens Fitters to practice to the full scope of their provincial legislation.

Please note, in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, Licensed Opticians are considered "dual-licensed," meaning they must successfully complete training in both the Eyeglasses and Contact Lens Programs.

I have questions specifically about being licensed in Canada, who do I talk to?

Please contact your provincial regulatory body (College of Opticians).

I have questions specifically about NACOR. Who do I contact?

Please contact NACOR directly (<http://www.nacor.ca/contact.aspx>).

Does NAIT offer a NACOR prep course?

We offer an optional review lab in the second year of the Eyeglasses Program, which may give students a better idea about the NACOR exam, but it is *not* a NACOR prep course.