

Expectations of Optometry and Vision Science Students

Optometry accreditation requirements

The UNSW Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry Program is accredited by the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) to ensure program graduates achieve entry-level competency and professional capabilities for optometry and are suitable for registration with the Optometry Board of Australia (<https://www.optometryboard.gov.au/>) to practice as an optometrist in Australia or New Zealand.

The School of Optometry and Vision Science is responsible for registering students who commence the Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program at UNSW with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), which is independent of UNSW, and students remain registered for the duration of their study, or until they are no longer enrolled (<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Student-Registrations.aspx>). After completing the Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program at UNSW, it is the responsibility of the program graduate to apply for registration to practice as an optometrist with AHPRA. Under the National Law, optometrists have obligations they must meet to be registered by AHPRA as an optometrist (<https://www.optometryboard.gov.au/Registration.aspx>).

Working as an optometrist is both rewarding and challenging. AHPRA developed a shared **Code of Conduct** which describes what is expected from all practitioners registered under twelve national boards, including the Optometry Board of Australia (<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Code-of-conduct/Shared-Code-of-conduct.aspx>).

Risk management is an essential aspect of good optometry practice. Risk management includes students and registered practitioners recognising and managing health conditions that could adversely affect their judgement and/or performance.

Expectations of optometry and vision science students

UNSW is committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusiveness and the Faculty of Medicine & Health encourages applications from students with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds. This document has been developed to clarify expectations of UNSW optometry and vision science students, with the aim of helping prospective applicants and students make informed decisions about future study and professional requirements.

Where there are disabilities that impact upon an applicant's or student's ability to meet these expectations, the University will provide reasonable adjustments via Equitable Learning Services: <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/els/services>. Reasonable adjustments are intended to assist a student to undertake the course or program on the same or similar basis as a student without the disability.

Adjustments must be reasonable and cannot undermine the academic integrity of a course or program. This means that adjustments must be reasonable within the circumstances.

We expect that students will engage with their studies and apply themselves to achieve success. In addition to complying with UNSW policies and procedures, optometry and vision science students at UNSW are expected to act in a professional manner in learning environments and situations encountered while in the optometry and vision science program.

Clinical learning in simulated and actual clinical environments is an essential component embedded across the entire five years of the UNSW Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program. Some clinical placements take place in NSW Health Facilities and all students are required to comply with NSW Health policies. This includes compliance with police checks, vaccination and wearing of personal protective equipment [Student Compliance | HETI \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/health-and-care-services/health-professionals/student-compliance).

In order to succeed in clinical learning, it is expected that students engage with patients, fellow students, teaching staff, optometrists and other health practitioners. Three important, interlinked areas of expectation are:

1. Physical and observational capabilities.
2. Effective communication.
3. Teamwork.

Examples of expectations in these areas are provided below.

1. Physical and observational capabilities

Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry students will be expected to demonstrate that they are sufficiently able, both physically and mentally, to acquire information (verbal form, observations and through eye examinations) and carry out a range of eye and vision related clinical assessments to be able to provide safe, culturally responsive, holistic, appropriate, independent and patient-centred care.

To protect the public from the risk of harm, UNSW must submit a mandatory notification about registered students to the Optometry Board of Australia if there is reasonable belief that there is a substantial risk of harm to the public due to the student's impairment to their physical and observational capabilities. Section 5 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law defines impairment as *'a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence) that detrimentally affects or is likely to detrimentally affect the student's capacity to carry out clinical training.'*

School of Optometry and Vision Science teaching staff have a duty of care to observe and monitor student interactions with public patients, to identify, mitigate, and manage the impact of any impairment including risk of harm to the public. Risk management approaches embedded in courses of the Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program include ongoing student feedback and regular evaluations of students' ability to safely and competently perform clinical tasks. The teaching staff likewise support students' equitable learning plans approved by the UNSW Equitable Learning Services to ensure public safety without compromising the student's learning experience. Students may also be referred to UNSW Student Support Team to promote the development of skills needed to navigate and succeed at university including completion of the Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program.



2. Effective Communication

Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry students will be expected to communicate effectively and sensitively in spoken and written English with a range of different people to establish rapport, involve patients and carers in decision making, and practise in a culturally appropriate way to deliver high quality, safe care. Students will be expected to complete clinical tasks in reasonable time frames. The UNSW Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry program's graduate capabilities include demonstration of effective, clear, empathetic and professional communication in both oral and written format with patients and their families, carer(s) or guardian(s) and other health professionals, as well as maintaining accurate and pertinent records (whether electronic, written or a combination of both) of relevant interactions or communications. Effective communication includes interpreting investigations, and following, formulating, and transmitting patient management plans.

3. Teamwork

Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Clinical Optometry students will be expected to work cohesively, respectfully and effectively as part of diverse teams, taking responsibility for their actions. They will be expected to contribute to their teams, aligned with their learning plan. Optometry and vision science students will be expected to recognise, respect and incorporate the skills of other professionals into their clinical performance.

If you have any concerns about the expectations for optometry and vision science students, you may contact our Student Experience Team at optometry@unsw.edu.au, who will be able to provide you with further advice.

If you have concerns regarding practising as an optometrist after graduation, we recommend that you contact the Optometry Board of Australia for advice. Their contact details are available on the following website: <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Contact-Us.aspx>

Support for students

This website details all the different services available to students <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/we-help-you> including:

- General wellbeing (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/hsu>)
- Feelings and mental health (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/mhc>)
- Sexual health and relationships (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/sexualhealth>)
- Uni and life pressures (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/advisors>)
- Reporting harassment (<https://www.unsw.edu.au/planning-assurance/safety/safer-communities/gendered-violence>)
- Educational adjustments (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/equitable-learning>)
- Academic and study skills (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/skills>)
- Special consideration (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration>)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community (<https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/current-students>)
- Legal and advocacy services (<https://www.arc.unsw.edu.au/help/legal-information>)

Version dated 17th January 2025 and approved 23rd Jan 2025

