Ophthalmic and Optometric Assisting

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Overview

This program equips you with the essential skills to support eye care professionals, including ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians.

As a student, you will:

- learn the key medical and scientific principles of eye care
- gain expertise in optimal eye health and vision care terminology and procedures
- engage in a mix of classroom theory, hands-on lab practice and a clinical practicum
- obtain unique skill sets that prepare you for two professions (ophthalmology and optometry) within one program.

Graduates can pursue careers as assistants in diverse medical settings, including private eye care clinics, corporate eye care practices and surgical eye centres.

Traits, skills and aptitudes

Those in ophthalmic and optometric assisting tend to be methodical, social and objective.

You need:

- to be organized
- effective communication skills
- the ability to work independently or with others
- to work well under stress, maintain professional behaviour and regulate your emotions
- patience and a courteous, pleasant manner
- critical thinking skills
- the ability to interact confidently and instil confidence in patients
- a high regard for patient confidentiality
- fine motor skills and good vision (with or without corrective lenses).

Ophthalmic and optometric assistants may wear personal protective equipment (PPE) for long periods, which includes exposure to latex and disinfection materials.

They also need to be able to meet the physical demands of the job, which can include spending most of their working hours on their feet and performing repetitive tasks.

You may work extended hours and shift work, including nights and weekends.

You are strongly encouraged to refer to the ALIS website for career, learning, and employment information for ophthalmic medical personnel to ensure you can successfully meet the occupational requirements for the program and profession.

SAIT program pathways

Graduates of this certificate program meet the admission requirements for SAIT's Optician diploma program.

In addition, this program's curriculum aligns with the first semester of the diploma program, allowing you to earn your diploma with just one and a half additional years of study.

Practicum, Co-op and Work Integrated Learning

You will complete a required practicum in either an ophthalmology or optometry clinic.

You will be assigned practicum placements with consideration given to your preference of location. However, due to limited availability in Calgary, it might be necessary for you to travel or relocate outside the city.

The healthcare field has a strong focus on health, wellness, and fitness to practice due to the demanding nature of the work and Occupational Health and Safety requirements. As such, special considerations will not be granted based on individual circumstances or preferences, except those stated as protected grounds when an accommodation has been approved.

In compliance with the practica agreements with our clinical partners, you will be required to provide specific documentation before you can participate in your practicum. Find out what requirements you need for this program.

Accreditations, designations and certifications

Our Ophthalmic and Optometric Assisting program provides entry-level certification, and is aligned with the competencies outlined by the International Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (IJCAHPO) guidelines.

Specialized Intakes

This program is available to **international applicants** as a stand-alone program or as part of a program bundle - two programs delivered consecutively.

For details on available bundles including this program, see international bundle programs.

Credentials

Upon successful completion of this program, you'll be awarded a SAIT Ophthalmic and Optometric Assisting certificate.

Admission requirements

Applicants educated in Canada

All applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency and meet the following requirements or equivalents:

- at least 60% in English Language Arts 30-1 or 30-2, and
- at least 60% in Math 30-1 or 30-2, and
- at least 60% in Biology 30 or Science 30

SAIT accepts high school course equivalents for admission for applicants educated outside Alberta.

Applicants educated outside of Canada

All applicants who were educated outside of Canada must demonstrate English language proficiency and provide proof they meet the program admission requirements with an international document assessment. Find accepted educational documents and assessment options.

SAIT may also accept courses completed at certain international post-secondary institutions.

Costs

2026/27 tuition and fees

The following estimated costs are effective as of July 1, 2026.

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees is based on the suggested schedule of study. Following a modified schedule will impact the fees you pay per semester and may alter final costs.

Domestic Students

Year	Number of semesters	Tuition fees	Additional fees	Total per year
1	2	$7,992	$1,764.50	$9,756.50

Year	Number of semesters	Tuition fees	Additional fees	Total per year
			Total cost:	**$9,756.50**

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees for domestic students is based on the recommended course load per year.

International Students

The program total is based on the estimated amount you will pay if you enter this program during the 2026/27 academic year. The program total amount listed on your letter of admission may appear higher. This amount is your maximum tuition guarantee for the program. SAIT will not exceed this maximum, regardless of changes in tuition and fees between academic years.

Year	Number of semesters	Tuition fees	Additional fees	Total per year
1	2	$19,386	$1,764.50	$21,150.50
			Total cost:	**$21,150.50**

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees for international students is based on the recommended course load per year.

Books and Supplies

Books and supplies are approximately $1,200 per full-time year.

An Apple or Windows-based laptop is required. This is a bring-your-own-device program with a standard computer hardware and software requirement. See the specific requirements on our computers and laptops page. Tablets or mobile phones are not suitable alternatives.

Find your booklist on the SAIT Bookstore's website. Booklists are created by semester and available approximately two weeks before classes begin.

Required personal protective equipment (PPE) and uniforms

You will require:

- navy scrubs (pants and top)
- closed-toe water-impermeable shoes.

Additional industry-approved PPE will be discussed before the start of labs.

Additional fees

- The School of Health and Public Safety strongly recommends that students meet Alberta Health Services' Standard for Immunization of Post-Secondary Health Care Students. Fees for completing immunization requirements start at $85, however, may increase, depending on your vaccination history, and any new immunizations you choose to acquire.
- You are responsible for additional expenses related to your practicum, including pre-practicum requirements and relocation costs to practicum sites outside of Calgary.