NAIT/OAC Optical Sciences – Contact Lenses

The Optical Sciences Contact Lens Program is produced by the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and is administered by the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) to students outside of the province of Alberta and Territories. This program is offered in English and French.

This program is specifically focused on the fitting of contact lenses. You'll be introduced to the art and science of contact lens fit, design, care and management of both soft and hard lenses. We will also discuss specialty lenses and examine required follow-up procedures. This program is only available to those already working in the optical industry.

The ability to dispense contact lenses is a specialized skill, one that employers recognize as a great asset. This two-semester independent study program is an advanced practice that will require a qualified preceptor in your workplace to guide and directly supervise your clinical training. This training consists of 500 contact lens hours over 2 clinical courses (250 hours per semester, which results in over 20 hours per week).

The Contact Lens Program is two semesters (approximately 8 months) of training. Semester One of the program runs from September to the middle of December; Semester Two runs January to the middle of April.

In order to proceed to Semester Two, students must have met the requirements of Semester One, i.e., have successfully completed all the theoretical courses and the mandatory clinical course.

Where It Can Take You

The skill of fitting and dispensing contact lenses will increase your opportunities in the optical industry, or with ophthalmologists or optometrists. By enhancing their skills, graduates offer increased value to employees and clients. *Some provinces require certification in Contact Lenses in order to grant a license to practice as an Optician (i.e. British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec).*

Accreditation & Industry Certification

The NAIT Optical Sciences Programs are accredited by Accreditation Canada https://accreditation.ca/

Students in B.C. must successfully complete training in both Eyeglasses and Contact Lenses*.
**For students enrolled in 2026 or later*

Completion of this program is **one of the steps** towards registration as a Licensed Optician in British Columbia. The next step is to successfully pass the NACOR Optical Sciences Contact Lens Examination. For more information on the NACOR exams, go to www.nacor.ca.

To become a Licensed Optician in B.C., an individual must meet all registration requirements of the College of Health and Care Professionals of British Columbia (CHCPBC). For further information on registration as a Licensed Optician in B.C., visit the CHCPBC website at https://chcpbc.org/for-professions/opticians/

Quick Facts

Credential: Certificate
Length: 2 semesters (8 months)
Intakes: Fall
Location: Not applicable

Application Deadlines

Fall 2026 Intake (September 1 start) – Application period: June 1 to August 5
This intake runs courses for Contact Lens Semester One

Winter 2027 Intake (January 7 start) – Application period: October 15 to December 1
This intake runs courses for Contact Lens Semester Two. Only students who have successfully completed Semester One can apply for this intake.

There are no additional intakes for the Contact Lens Program. Students wanting to enroll to start the Contact Lens Program must do so in the Fall intake. Students who successfully complete Semester One of the Contact Lens Program in the Fall intake, will move into Semester Two in the Winter intake which starts in January.

Admission Requirements (Minimum entrance requirements)

- **COMPLETION OF THE NAIT EYEGLASSES PROGRAM OR ASSESSED EQUIVALENT**
  Applicants who graduated from the Eyeglasses Program prior to 2015 must also successfully complete OPSC615 – Eye Health & Screening (must be completed a maximum of 3 months prior to enrollment in the Contact Lens program).

- **PROOF OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (ELP)**
  Applicants who have not previously completed the NAIT Optical Sciences Eyeglasses Diploma program must show proof of ELP. You can meet the ELP requirement for NAIT in one of the following ways:

  1. **Complete consecutive, full-time studies in English** – you meet this requirement if you have completed at least 3 years of high school (or combination of high school and post-secondary) in Canada or in a country on NAIT's ELP exempt country list – including completion of Grade 12 English; or you have completed at least 2 years of post-secondary

in Canada or an ELP exempt country. Your studies must have been in English, full-time, and consecutive. **CLICK HERE TO VIEW NAITs ELP EXEMPT COUNTRY LIST**

2. **Complete specific English language courses -** Achieve acceptable marks in an approved English language course(s). **CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

3. **Take an ELP Test** - NAIT accepts certain ELP assessment tests and scores. ELP test results are only valid for two years from the test date. **CLICK HERE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Non-Academic Requirements

- **WORKING IN AN OPTICAL DISPENSARY WITH AN APPROVED QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR** Applicant must be employed within the optical industry, with a qualified preceptor/supervisor willing to supervise the clinical (practical) component of the program. The preceptor must be a registered Licensed Optician (including Contact Lenses) or Optometrist. A preceptor is required to apply to be an approved NAIT preceptor with the OAC prior to a student applying for enrollment (further information can be found in the Application Process document). The OAC and NAIT allow a preceptor to supervise a maximum of two (2) students at a time. The OAC and NAIT allow a student to have a maximum of two (2) preceptors. Additional requests must be approved by the OAC. Preceptors must abide by and follow the policies and guidelines as outlined by their Provincial Regulatory College as it pertains to supervision of a student, if applicable. Please ensure that your preceptor has checked with their Provincial Regulatory College to ensure they understand and meet the policies and/or requirements of your province, if applicable.

  PLEASE NOTE: For Preceptors who are Licensed Opticians (including Contact Lenses) in BC, the Regulatory College in BC (College of Health and Care Professionals of British Columbia - CHCPBC) does not currently have any requirements in place outside of the NAIT requirements related to supervision of a student in BC.

Tuition & Fees (subject to change)

For the 2026/2027 academic year, Contact Lens courses are priced at $192.00 per credit.

The fees below outline enrollment in all courses for a particular Semester for Fall 2026 and Winter 2027 intakes (if you are not enrolling in a full semester of courses, contact **education@opticians.ca** for tuition fees):

Contact Lens Semester One

$3055.00 ($2880.00 tuition + $175.00 ancillary fees)

Contact Lens Semester Two

$3055.00 ($2880.00 tuition + $175.00 ancillary fees

Tuition does not include applicable application fees, textbooks, workshop fees and supplies that may be recommended or required.

Textbooks & Supplies (estimate)

Semester 1: $300 Semester 2: $300

**Please refer to Textbook & Supplies found under About the Program in this document.*

How to Apply

Students outside of the province of Alberta and Territories register directly through the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC); **DO NOT** register through APAS on the NAIT website. Please refer to **'Application Process'** on the **OAC – NAIT Programs site** for information on how to apply.

APPLICATION FEE: To apply for the Optical Sciences Programs, there is a non-refundable program application fee of $50 + GST (subject to change). This fee applies to first time Contact Lens applicants only and is due prior to applying.

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS: This program is not available to international students residing within Canada. This program is only available in Canada to individuals who hold the status of Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident of Canada.

Advanced Credit

You may apply for advanced credit once you have been accepted into the program. Advanced Credit can be Transfer Credit (for completed post-secondary courses) or PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition). Advanced credit requirements that are applied to each request include:

- You must have completed the course or program no more than two (2) years ago.
- You must have a minimum mark of C- in the course(s) or program.
- Additional requirements may apply.

About the Program

The Optical Sciences Contact Lens certificate program is an 8-month independent study program consisting of two semesters. Each semester requires completion of theoretical courses and a clinical course. The clinical courses consist of on-the-job training similar in nature to an apprenticeship –

students perfect their skills under the supervision of a qualified preceptor at their place of employment.

Distance Learning

In order to provide maximum flexibility to complete your courses on evenings and weekends, we have designed this program to be taken online. The program, including course material and assessments, is accessible through Brightspace, NAIT's online eLearning system. This method of delivery allows you to participate in course forums and access learning materials whenever you want, from the comfort of your own home, office, or local coffee shop.

The program contains online learning guided by an online instructor. Students participate in online discussions, can view and print class notes, and apply theory through hands-on exercises and quizzes. Students also complete an online final examination at the end of each semester.

The average study time required to spend each week on the course is approximately 14 hours; however, the time required to master the content will vary with each individual. This time DOES NOT include clinical work.

Technology Requirements

A reliable high-speed internet connection is required to connect to the online course content in Brightspace. To use Brightspace, any current and supported operating system and web browser will work, however Mozilla and Chrome are preferred.

A student-facing web camera either as part of your device or as an external plug-in device is required for evaluations, assessments and exams.

NEW Effective Fall 2026, the Optical Sciences Programs will use the online test proctoring service, Honorlock, for evaluations, assessments and final exams. **Honorlock DOES NOT ALLOW the use of iPads, tablets or handheld devices, therefore, students must avoid using these devices for their evaluations, assessments and final exams.**

To access course content in Brightspace, if using an iPad or tablet instead of a laptop or desktop computer, be aware that older and non-supported devices may not work in the program. ****REMINDER that an iPad, tablet or handheld device cannot be used during evaluations, assessments and final exams.***

Textbooks & Supplies

Tuition does not include the cost of textbooks(s) and supplies. It is the responsibility of the student to purchase the textbook(s) and supplies in time for course commencement.

Please consult the textbook & supply list by clicking on this link: **TEXTBOOK & SUPPLY LIST**
Students can purchase textbook and supplies through the NAIT Bookstore (https://shop.nait.ca), or an alternate source.

Semester Final Examinations

Final semester examinations are completed online. You will complete an examination for each theory course you are enrolled in. There will be a scheduled date and start time for the final semester examinations. Final-semester examinations will take place at the beginning to mid-December for Fall intake and the beginning to mid-April for Winter intake. **Examinations MUST be taken on the scheduled day at the scheduled time.** You will receive more information about final examinations in the Student Learner Success Guide.

Clinical (Practicum) Courses /Work Experience

A student is required to complete a clinical course in each semester of the Program. Through the clinical courses, students can put their knowledge of contact lens theory to use by working with patients and equipment **under direct supervision** of a qualified and approved preceptor. The preceptor must be a licensed, practicing Optician (including Contact Lenses) or Optometrist. Each clinical course requires 250 supervised contact lens hours to be documented and signed off by your preceptor. The 250 contact lens hours per clinical course are due at the end of each semester. There is also an accompanying clinical manual outlining specific practical competencies to be completed each semester. It is recommended that students complete 50 contact lens fittings per semester. NAIT and the OAC allow a preceptor to supervise a maximum of two (2) students at one time. NAIT and the OAC allow a student to have a maximum of two (2) preceptors unless a request for more is approved by the OAC.

It is important that you and your preceptor(s) understand the role they will play in your clinical courses before they agree to act in this role. **Click to learn more about the: CLINICAL COURSES AND THE ROLE OF A PRECEPTOR** *(Please print this off and provide a copy to your preceptor)*

Completion Requirements

To obtain a NAIT Optical Sciences Contact Lenses Certificate, students must successfully complete:

- 8 online theory courses with a minimum overall passing grade of 63% in each course.

- 2 clinical courses each consisting of 250 hours and a clinical manual under the direct supervision of a qualified and approved preceptor. The 250 hours and clinical manual are due at the end of each semester. *The time frame to complete a clinical course is approximately 3-4 months, which translates to approximately 20 hours of supervised contact lens related work per week.*

Required Courses

Here is the list of required courses that must be taken to successfully complete your program.

Term 1

OPCL2111 Introduction to Contact Lenses – 3.0 credits

Opticians need to know the terminology, concepts and regulatory environments for contact lens practice. This course introduces the common regulatory practice standards, terminology and communication, patient charting and uses of contact lenses in clinical practice.

OPCL2112 Contact Lens Eye Health – 3.0 credits

Opticians must be able to recognize contraindications to contact lens wear, the health effects of contact lenses on the eye, and the effects of disease and medication on contact lens wear. Students will learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of common ocular and systemic conditions and how they and common medications relate to contact lens wear.

OPCL2113 Introduction to Contact Lens Fitting – 3.0 credits

Opticians need to know how to measure and assess the eye and use the information to fit contact lenses to the eye. Students will learn how to operate equipment to observe and measure ocular parameters and understand the fundamental principles of material, shape and power selection that determine how lenses fit the eye.

OPCL2114 Contact Lens Assessment and Care – 3.0 credits

Opticians must determine if a patient's contact lens fit is successful and how contact lenses need to be cared for to increase success. Students will learn to assess the fit of contact lenses and improve patient outcomes by changing the fit and use of contacts and enhancing the care of contacts through patient education.

OPCL2191 Clinical I: Contact Lenses – 3.0 credits

Opticians must be able to apply their ocular and optics knowledge in a professional and safe manner in clinical practice. Students will apply their knowledge under direct supervision by clinical practicums, the prefit assessment, fitting, and fit evaluation of soft lenses and lens care instructions to patients.

Term 2

OPCL3210 Advanced Soft Contact Lens Fitting – 3.0 credits

Opticians must be able to fit soft contacts for special situations such as astigmatism, presbyopia, post-surgical or therapeutic purposes. Students will learn to adapt fitting principles to toric, multifocal, and therapeutic lenses.

OPCL3211 Contact Lens Optics and Rigid Contact Lens Fitting – 3.0 credits

Opticians need to understand contact lens optics and how the cornea and contact lens relationship affects optics and, ultimately, patient vision. Students gain an understanding of contact lens optics by fitting and designing RGP contact lenses.

OPCL3212 Specialty Contact Lenses – 3.0 credits

Opticians need to be able to fit RGP lenses for special applications like astigmatism, presbyopia, and irregular astigmatism. Students will learn to fit and design various rigid toric lenses, rigid lenses for irregular corneal shape and presbyopia.

OPCL3213 Contact Lens Administrative Practices – 3.0 credits

Opticians need to be able to follow standards of practice, best practices and ensure quality control. Students learn to evaluate contact lenses for quality control and follow best practices in administration and communication.

OPCL3292 Clinical II: Contact Lenses – 3.0 credit

Opticians must be able to apply their ocular and optics knowledge in a professional and safe manner in clinical practice. Students will apply their knowledge under direct supervision to clinical practicums, including contact lens optics, the prefit assessment, fitting, and fit evaluation of RGP lenses and lens care instructions to patients.