



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 certificate intended for Licensed, practicing Opticians 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).

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.

Semester One of the program runs from August to the beginning of December; Semester Two courses run January to the beginning of April.

Where It Can Take You

A license to dispense 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 this certificate in order to grant a license to practice as an Optician (i.e. Ontario and Quebec).*

Accreditation & Industry Certification

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

Completion of this program **is one of the steps** towards registration as a Contact Lens Optician in Nova Scotia. 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.



Students in Nova Scotia must meet all registration requirements of the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians (NSCDO). For further information on registration as a Contact Lens Optician in NS, contact the NSCDO. <http://www.nscdo.ca/>

Quick Facts

Credential: Certificate
Length: 2 semesters (8 months)

Intakes: Fall (September)
Location: Not applicable

Application Deadlines

Fall 2024 Intake (August 28 start) – Application period: June 1 to August 5

This intake runs courses for Contact Lens Semester One

Winter 2025 Intake (January 3 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/OAC 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](#)
- **PROOF AS A LICENSED, PRACTICING OPTICIAN** - Applicants must be currently licensed with their Provincial Regulatory College/Board of Opticians and practicing as an Optician in their respective province. Proof of practice from the Provincial Regulatory College of Opticians is required with application. This can be in the form of a photo of license certificate with current date, picture of license name badge or card that includes current date, or letter from Regulator.
 - **CONTACT LENS STUDENT REGISTRATION** - Applicants residing in Nova Scotia must be registered as a Contact Lens Student with the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians (NSCDO) prior to being accepted into a Contact Lens Training Program. The cost to register as a Contact Lens Student is approximately \$50.00 and is subject to change. For further information and to download a Student Application for Registration, go to the NSCDO website here: [NSCDO | Opticians](#). If you have any questions about registering with the NSCDO, contact them at registrar@nscdo.org or call 902-425-7928. Proof of registration as a Contact Lens Student with the NSCDO is required with your application to enroll in the Contact Lens Program.
 - **WORKING IN AN OPTICAL DISPENSARY WITH A 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 Contact Lens Optician or Optometrist. 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 in Nova Scotia, the Regulatory College in Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians - NSCDO) requires that you are licensed for a minimum of two (2) years prior to being eligible to sponsor/supervise a student and you are limited to the number of students you can supervise at one time. For more information, please refer to the Sponsor Agreement form located on the NSCDO website here: [NSCDO | Opticians](#). Alternatively, you can contact the NSCDO at registrar@nscdo.org or call 902-425-7928.



Tuition & Fees - (subject to change)

For the 2024/2025 academic year, Contact Lens courses are priced at \$188.00 per credit (\$470.00 for *International students*). If you are not enrolling in a full semester of courses, your tuition fees are based per credit (contact education@opticians.ca for more information if this pertains to you).

Contact Lens Semester One

\$2940.00 (\$2820.00 tuition + \$120.00 ancillary fees)
International fee: \$7170.00 (\$7050.00 tuition + \$120.00 ancillary fees)

Contact Lens Semester Two

\$2940.00 (\$2820.00 tuition + \$120.00 ancillary fees)
International fee: \$7170.00 (\$7050.00 tuition + \$120.00 ancillary fees)

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

**International designation refers to students who do not have the status of Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident of Canada.*

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 the '[Application Process](#)' document for information on how to apply.

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

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS: Some NAIT programs are unavailable to international students because they do not meet eligibility for a [study permit](#) or [Post-Graduation Work Permit](#) (PGWP).

- **Study Permit:** This program is delivered through [distance learning](#) and therefore does not meet the criteria for a study permit.
- **Co-Op:** Due to this program not meeting the criteria of a study permit, it also does not meet the criteria for a Co-Op Work Permit.
- **Post-Graduation Work Permit:** This program is delivered through [distance learning](#) and therefore is not eligible for the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) Program. Completion of this program will not make you eligible for a [PGWP](#).



International students who have questions about permissions to take this program can [contact](#) a NAIT Academic Advisor – International to discuss options.

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.

To use Brightspace, any current and supported operating system and web browser will work, however Mozilla and Chrome are preferred.

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. A student-facing web camera either as part of the device or as a plug-in external device is required for tests and exams.



The Optical Sciences Programs use Respondus and Lockdown browser for tests and exams. Please review the computer requirements listed for the lockdown browser:

- [What are the computer requirements for installations of Respondus LockDown Browser? – Respondus Support](#)

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 of December for Fall intake and the beginning of 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 Handbook.

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 preceptor. The preceptor must be a licensed, practicing Contact Lens Optician 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 are able to 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 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.