

TARRANT COUNTY COLLEGE

# Ophthalmic Assistant & Technician Program



Information Session

Rev. September 2025







# Agenda

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*"Enhancing Vision, Empowering Careers."*



# The Profession



## > Ophthalmic Professionals: Key Players in Eye Care

Ophthalmic professionals are vital members of the eye care team, working alongside ophthalmologists and optometrists to provide comprehensive vision services. These allied health personnel play crucial roles, ranging from conducting diagnostic tests and assisting in surgical procedures to educating patients and managing administrative tasks.

## > Certified Ophthalmic Technicians (COTs)

COTs are highly trained professionals who perform advanced ophthalmic duties. Their responsibilities include:

- Conducting comprehensive eye exams and diagnostic tests (e.g., visual fields, keratometry, ophthalmic imaging)
- Assisting during surgical procedures and laser treatments
- Fitting and instructing patients on contact lens use
- Performing refractometry and retinoscopy for glasses prescriptions
- Supervising and training other ophthalmic staff

## > Certified Ophthalmic Assistants (COAs)

COAs are entry-level professionals who support ophthalmologists and optometrists in various ways:

- Gathering patient histories and measuring visual acuity
- Administering eye drops and performing basic eye tests
- Assisting with minor procedures and patient education
- Managing patient records, scheduling appointments, and coordinating care

> Together, these ophthalmic professionals contribute to delivering high-quality eye care services, from routine examinations to specialized treatments and surgical interventions.



# The Benefits and Rewards of Becoming an Ophthalmic Professional



## ➤ Making a Positive Impact

Ophthalmic professionals play a crucial role in preserving and improving patients' vision, which directly enhances their quality of life. The ability to help people see better and prevent blindness is incredibly rewarding.

## ➤ Diverse Career Opportunities

Ophthalmology offers a wide range of subspecialties, such as cornea, glaucoma, retina, pediatrics, and oculoplastics, allowing professionals to specialize in areas of interest. Certified professionals can advance to lead technician, diagnostic technician, supervisor, or preoperative technician roles.

## ➤ Excellent Work-Life Balance

Most ophthalmologists work regular hours, providing ample time for family and personal activities after completing training. Ophthalmic professionals generally do not have to work nights, weekends, or holidays.

## ➤ Continuous Learning and Growth

The field of ophthalmology is constantly evolving with new technologies, treatments, and surgical techniques, offering opportunities for ongoing professional development and preventing stagnation.

## ➤ High Demand and Job Security

With an aging population and increasing prevalence of eye diseases, there is a growing need for qualified ophthalmic professionals to meet the demand.



# The Benefits and Rewards of Becoming an Ophthalmic Professional cont.



## ➤ **Competitive Compensation**

Certified and experienced ophthalmic professionals can command competitive salaries, especially in urban areas with a higher cost of living.

## ➤ **Stimulating Work Environment**

Ophthalmic practices often utilize cutting-edge lasers, microscopes, cameras, and instruments, providing a technologically advanced and stimulating work environment.



# Program Description



The Ophthalmic Assistant & Technician Program at Tarrant County College (TCC) offers comprehensive training and education in eye healthcare through three flexible pathways:

## 1. **Certified Ophthalmic Assistant I (Certificate I) – Nonclinical Pathway (12 Months, Evening Classes)**

- Designed for individuals new to ophthalmology or current staff seeking career advancement, this nonclinical pathway provides foundational knowledge and office-based skills. This flexible program includes six evening courses, four with supervised lab components, focusing on patient communication, administrative duties, and basic ophthalmic clinical diagnostic testing skills.

## 2. **Certified Ophthalmic Assistant II (Certificate II) – Clinical Entry-Level Pathway (12 Months, Evening Classes)**

- Also intended for beginners and current staff aiming to advance clinically, this pathway combines six evening courses with extensive hands-on training through two clinical rotations. Students develop practical skills in diagnostic testing and patient care, preparing them for entry-level clinical ophthalmic assisting roles and certification eligibility.

## 3. **Certified Ophthalmic Technician (Associate of Applied Science, 21-Month Full-Time Pathway)**

- This rigorous program is for students prepared to undertake comprehensive ophthalmic training. It includes evening classes in the first year and both daytime and evening classes in the second year, combined with four clinical rotations. Graduates gain advanced clinical and technical expertise to excel as intermediate to advanced ophthalmic professionals, fully prepared for technician-level certification.

Our nationally recognized program adheres to the rigorous standards of the International Council of Accreditation (ICA) and the International Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (IJCAHPO). Graduates of the clinical pathways are eligible to take the Certified Ophthalmic Assistant (COA) and Certified Ophthalmic Technician (COT) examinations.

Tarrant County College is proud to offer flexible options, including full-time, part-time, and evening classes, delivering cost-effective, high-quality ophthalmic education to meet diverse student needs.



# Program Objectives



Graduates of the Ophthalmic Assistant & Technician Program at Tarrant County College will be able to:

- Communicate effectively and compassionately with diverse patient populations, promoting patient- and family-centered care.
- Demonstrate a solid understanding of ophthalmic anatomy, terminology, diagnostic testing, and clinical procedures relevant to ophthalmic assisting roles.
- Apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to support patient intake, office logistics, and ophthalmic patient care tasks.
- Exhibit professional behaviors, including adherence to ethical standards, patient confidentiality, and workplace safety.
- Utilize ophthalmic instruments and technology accurately to support clinical workflow under physician supervision.
- **(For AAS graduates)** Perform advanced diagnostic testing and clinical procedures to assist in the diagnosis and management of ocular conditions.
- **(For AAS graduates)** Analyze and document ophthalmic clinical findings accurately to assist ophthalmologists in patient care planning and treatment evaluation.
- **(For AAS graduates)** Demonstrate leadership and collaboration skills to contribute effectively within multidisciplinary ophthalmic healthcare teams.



	Ophthalmic Technician (Associate of Applied Science)	Ophthalmic Assistant II (Certificate II) – Clinical Entry-Level Pathway	Ophthalmic Assistant I (Certificate I) – Nonclinical Pathway
Program Duration	Full-time: 21 months Total Degree Hours: 60	Part-time: 12 months Total Degree Hours: 32	Part-time: 12 months Total Degree Hours: 15
Fall I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1311 - The Visual System</li><li>OPTS 2341 - Ophthalmic Techniques</li><li>ENGL 1301 - Composition I +</li><li>MATH 1314 - College Algebra +</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1311 - The Visual System</li><li>OPTS 2341 - Ophthalmic Techniques</li><li>ENGL 1301 - Composition I +</li><li>MATH 1314 - College Algebra +</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1311 - The Visual System</li><li>OPTS 2341 - Ophthalmic Techniques</li></ul>
Spring I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1319 - Vision Care Office Procedures</li><li>OPTS 1315: Basic Contact Lenses</li><li>OPTS 1366: Clinical Practicum I</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1319 - Vision Care Office Procedures</li><li>OPTS 1315: Basic Contact Lenses</li><li>OPTS 1366: Clinical Practicum I</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1319 - Vision Care Office Procedures</li><li>OPTS 1315: Basic Contact Lenses</li></ul>
Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 2345 - Advanced Ophthalmic Techniques</li><li>OPTS 1266: Clinical Practicum II</li><li>Creative Arts/Language, Philosophy and Culture Semester Hours: 6 *</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 2345 - Advanced Ophthalmic Techniques</li><li>OPTS 1266: Clinical Practicum II</li><li>Creative Arts/Language, Philosophy and Culture Semester Hours: 6 *</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 2345 - Advanced Ophthalmic Techniques</li></ul>
Fall II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 1305 - Geometric Optics</li><li>OPTS 1492 - Ophthalmic Seminar</li><li>OPTS 2335 - Advanced Contact Lenses</li><li>OPTS 2366 - Clinical Practicum III</li></ul>	N/A	N/A
Spring II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPTS 2350 - Ophthalmic Surgical Techniques</li><li>OPTS 2367 - Clinical Practicum IV</li><li>HUMA 1301 - Introduction to Humanities I +</li><li>PSYC 2301 - General Psychology +</li></ul>	N/A	N/A

- 
- All three pathways follow a similar curriculum schedule during the first year, with didactic courses primarily held on Wednesday evenings from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, subject to semester variation.
  - Clinical assignments are coordinated with partner clinics, generally between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, in shifts such as 8:00 AM–12:30 PM, 8:00 AM–4:30 PM, or 12:30 PM–5:00 PM.
  - Students should anticipate dedicating 20 to 24 hours per week to clinical training.
  - In the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) pathway, didactic courses continue in the evenings during the first year, then expand to include both evening and daytime classes in the second year.



# Cost of Attendance

Fee Category	Ophthalmic Technician (Associate of Applied Science)	Ophthalmic Assistant II (Certificate II) – Clinical Entry-Level Pathway	Ophthalmic Assistant I (Certificate I) – Nonclinical Pathway
Tuition	\$4,440	\$2,368	\$1,110
CastleBranch Fee	\$130.97	\$130.97	\$130.97
Trajecsyst Fee	\$75-150	\$75-150	N/A
Books and Uniforms (Estimate)	\$600-700	\$400-600	\$200-300
Estimated Total	\$5,245-5,420	\$3,000-3,248	\$1,445-1,535

## Please note:

- Tuition is based on in-state, in-county rates.
  - [See Tuition & Fees for all Undergraduate Tuition Rates](#) (click to open)

**Trajecsyst and CastleBranch** are 2 secure online portals that play vital roles for students in our program.

- CastleBranch** oversees your screenings, including:
  - Background checks
  - Drug tests
  - Clinical requirements, such as immunization records
  - CPR certifications
- Trajecsyst** is a clinical record-keeping system for practicum courses where you can:
  - Document your daily activities
  - Seek approval for time records and skill proficiencies
  - Generate customized reports for accreditation



# Certification Eligibility After Program Completion



- Upon successful completion of the program, graduates from all three pathways become eligible to apply for certification examinations administered by the International Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (IJCAHPO):
- **Certified Ophthalmic Technician (COT) Exam**
  - Graduates of the **Ophthalmic Technician AAS** pathway qualify under the **COT-TI** eligibility requirements and may apply to take the **Certified Ophthalmic Technician exam**.
- **Certified Ophthalmic Assistant (COA) Exam – Clinical Pathway**
  - Graduates of the **Ophthalmic Assistant II** pathway qualify under the **COA-AI** clinical training program requirements and may apply to take the **Certified Ophthalmic Assistant exam**.
- **Ophthalmic Assistant I Pathway**
  - Graduates of the **Ophthalmic Assistant I** pathway become **eligible to sit for the COA exam upon program completion**; however, **IJCAHPO will withhold exam results until candidates submit verification of 500 supervised clinical hours completed within 12 months post-graduation**.

## **Clinical Hour Attainment:**

The 500-hour clinical requirement is typically met within three months of full-time employment under ophthalmologist supervision.

Candidates must meet IJCAHPO eligibility and work experience requirements to achieve certification.





# Admission Requirements - Ophthalmic Nonclinical Assistant (Level I) Certificate



- Must be admitted to Tarrant County College with a valid Student ID.
- High school diploma or GED required.
- A minimum GPA is **not** required for admission to the Ophthalmic nonclinical assistant (level I) certificate.
- Demonstrate academic readiness via:
  - Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA2) meeting benchmarks, OR
  - Passing TABE exam, OR
  - Official college transcripts showing passing grades.
- Mandatory attendance of a program information session (submit Certificate of Attendance).
- Required before class start:
  - Current CPR certification
  - Immunization records compliant with Texas Administrative Code
  - Criminal background check and drug screening
  - Proof of physical exam and health insurance
- English proficiency documentation (TOEFL iBT 83 or IELTS 6.5+) for non-native speakers.





# Admission Requirements - Ophthalmic Clinical Assistant (Level II) Certificate & Ophthalmic Technician (AAS)



- Must be admitted to Tarrant County College with a valid Student ID.
- Minimum 2.5 GPA on prior college or high school coursework.
- Must meet Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requirements or qualifying exemptions.
- Submit official transcripts from all prior schools.
- Mandatory attendance of a program information session (submit Certificate of Attendance).
- Required before class start:
  - Current CPR certification
  - Immunization records compliant with Texas Administrative Code and clinical site standards
  - Criminal background check and drug screening
  - Proof of physical exam and health insurance
  - Additional clinical site-specific requirements as applicable





# Immunization and Post-Acceptance Requirements (All Pathways)

## Immunization Requirements

Applicants must comply with immunization mandates from:

- [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\)](#) (click to open)
- [Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation Community Standards \(PDF\)](#) (click to open)

Required immunizations include:

- Hepatitis A & B
- Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (TDaP)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella
- Influenza (annual Flu shot)
- Tuberculosis Skin Test or Chest X-Ray

*Positive antibody titers are acceptable in place of vaccination.*

Applicants planning to apply within one year should begin immunizations promptly, as some series may take up to six months to complete.

## Post-Acceptance Requirements

Before the first day of class (upon acceptance), students must complete:

- Physical exam
- Health insurance coverage
- Criminal background check and drug screening

More information will be provided after acceptance.

# How to Apply

## ➤ Applications Available

Applications Available:

- **March 1:** Online applications open for fall admission

Application Deadline:

- **August 3:** Submit completed application materials

## ➤ Step 1: Apply to TCC

- Apply online: [ApplyTCC](#) (click to open)
- Follow [Application Instructions](#) (click to open)
- Receive your TCC Student ID after acceptance

## ➤ Step 2: Attend a Mandatory Information Session

- Learn about program requirements, courses, costs, and more
- Obtain and submit your Information Session Exit Ticket with your application

## ➤ Step 3: Confirm Eligibility

- Review detailed requirements: [Selective Admission: Ophthalmic Technician](#) (click to open)



## ➤ Step 4: Submit Official Transcripts

- From all colleges attended
- High school transcripts required if you have fewer than **12 college credits or no previous college**

## ➤ Step 5: English Proficiency (if applicable)

- Submit TOEFL iBT or IELTS scores if English is not your first language

## ➤ Step 6: Submit Your Complete Application by Deadline

- Use: [Health Sciences Program Application](#) (click to open)
- Include: CPR card, immunization records, Information Session Exit Ticket
- Submit electronically; paper applications not accepted
- Questions? Contact [TR.HealthCareAdvising@tccd.edu](mailto:TR.HealthCareAdvising@tccd.edu) (click to open)







# Have Questions?



If you have any questions or need further assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to our team:

## **Health Care Professions Advising Resource Hub**

Kimberlyn Moore-Debrossard, Career Advisor

Phone: 817-515-1484

Email: [TR.HealthCareAdvising@tccd.edu](mailto:TR.HealthCareAdvising@tccd.edu) **(click to open)**



## **Program Director**

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# Thank + You

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