Optometry school will
train residents*

To get better instructors for its
clinics, the University of Waterloo's
optometry school will start a new
program in September to train rec-
tant graduates how to teach.
The program, called an opto-
tometric residency, provides clinical
teaching education and training in a
special area of the field. About 10
students are expected to enrol this
fall.
The two-year full-time program
will also allow students to produce
clinical research of "high quality,"
says a report outlining the program's
structure and goals.
"The need for trained clinical
teaching personnel is acute within
the (UW) optometry program," the
report says.
"The school of optometry is cur-
tently meeting a considerable part
of its clinical teaching by the employ-
ment of graduates with less than
three years' experience in clinical
practice and with little or no teach-
ing experience.
"The nature of their employment
provides neither time nor oppor-
tunity for on-the-job training in
teaching and research metho-
dology."

Dr. Emerson Woodruff, opto-
tometry school director, said that of the 35
part-time clinical supervisors, 23
have "too little experience" in teach-
ing undergraduate students. But
they are "all good people," Dr.
Woodruff noted, adding that they
must have been in the "upper third
of their (graduating) class to be em-
ployed."

It's just that they have "minimal
experience" in teaching students as
they don't have an overview of all
aspects of optometry, the director
said.

He said the aim of the program is
to train "someone with a depth of
experience in an area and a broad
outlook on the optometry field—we
are not creating specialists."

Dr. Woodruff said the program
will provide its graduates with cli-
nical practice and teaching experi-
ence as well as an opportunity to do re-
search by using the school's library,
laboratories and "advanced instru-
mentation." In fact, to receive the
"diploma of residency," a student
must produce two papers showing
research into clinical aspects he or
she found interesting during the
training years.

One reason why the school finds it
hard to hire people with enough ex-
perience in clinical teaching and re-
search is that it can't match the
salaries optometry graduates can get
when they open their practices, Dr.
Woodruff said.
"Lots of grads go out to practice—
they can command a starting salary
of $23,000. And about a third of the
class go to other provinces. (UW's
optometry school is the only En-
glish-speaking one in the country.)
He said the nine full-time clinical
supervisors are fully qualified to do
their work since they have "enough
experience" in the clinical field.

To upgrade the teaching and re-
search skills of current part-time su-
pervisors, the school offers another
special program—provided they can
find time to take it.
The school's graduate studies
officer, Dr. Ross Beauchamp, said the
residency program is aimed at rec-
tant graduates since it would be un-
feasible for an optometrist to leave a
practice to take the full-time course.
The current supervisors would
also have to leave that job if they
wanted to take the program.
The program will allow students
to specialize in areas such as binocu-
lar vision, community health and en-
vironmental vision, contact lens
practice, low vision and ocular
health.

"The first year of the residency
will provide a broad experience in
several clinical areas and participa-
tion in didactic and laboratory ac-
tivities," says the program's report.
"The second year will provide
clinical courses and experience ex-
clusively in the areas of the resi-
dency."

Students may be required to take
courses in clinical teaching, depend-
ing on their background in the op-
tometry field.
The official goal of the program is
to "provide persons skilled in spe-
cialized optometric services and
produce teachers with research ca-
pability."

*Reprinted from the U.W. Gazette

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89