



## The African Federation of Optometry Students (AFOS): Bridging Gaps in Eye Care Across Africa

**Background:** The African Federation of Optometry Students (AFOS) was established in March 2024 to address the critical gaps in eye care across Africa. In many regions of the continent, access to quality eye care remains limited, leaving communities vulnerable to preventable vision loss. AFOS is dedicated to building a network of skilled optometry students who can actively contribute to improving eye health in their communities and beyond.

AFOS has partnered with VOSH/International to discuss and implement collaborative initiatives in its ongoing efforts to enhance eye care services. A key focus of this partnership is the establishment and reactivation of SVOSH (Student Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity) chapters across Africa. These chapters will play a crucial role in organising outreach programs that deliver free eye care to underserved populations, while also providing AFOS members with valuable hands-on clinical experience.

### Recent Milestones

**Meeting with the American Academy of Optometry (AAO):** AFOS recently engaged in a productive meeting with the AAO, marking a significant step toward bringing the African optometry community closer to the global stage. This meeting served as a platform to discuss potential collaborations and align goals, fostering stronger ties between African and international optometry organizations.

**Successful Meeting with the African Council of Optometry (AFCO):** In another significant achievement, AFOS held a successful meeting with AFCO to explore ways to strengthen optometry practices across Africa. The discussion centered on collaborative initiatives aimed at benefiting the wider African optometry community.

**Reactivation and Establishment of SVOSH Chapters:** AFOS has made strides in reactivating inactive SVOSH chapters in several African optometry schools, with plans underway to establish new chapters to further extend outreach efforts.

**Student Sponsorship for AFCO × OAU Conference:** In line with its commitment to professional development, AFOS is sponsoring students to attend the upcoming AFCO × OAU conference in Uganda, providing them with valuable exposure and networking opportunities.

**Educational Scholarship Opportunities for Future Studies:** AFOS is partnering with Africademics, a South African-based organization known for fostering scholarship ambassadors across Africa, to connect optometry students with opportunities for further studies. This collaboration aims to bring valuable educational resources and scholarships closer to those interested in advancing their academic and professional careers.

**Launch of AFOS Social Media Pages:** To enhance communication and engagement, AFOS has launched its presence on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. These platforms serve as hubs where students can connect, share knowledge, and stay updated on AFOS initiatives.

## Exciting Future Plans

**Upcoming Webinars:** AFOS is organizing a series of webinars featuring experts who will discuss academic and career opportunities in optometry. These sessions aim to equip students with the knowledge needed to excel in their studies and future careers.

**Interactive Clinical Cases:** AFOS plans to introduce initiatives where students can engage in diagnosing and discussing real clinical cases. These activities will help bridge knowledge gaps and prepare members for professional practice.

**Student Exchange Program:** This program will offer students the chance to study and gain clinical experience in different African countries, fostering cross-cultural exchange and professional growth.

**Leadership Training:** AFOS is committed to developing the leadership skills of its members through targeted training sessions, covering key areas such as team management, strategic planning, and effective communication.

**Smooth Transition After Graduation:** To support graduates in their transition to the professional world, AFOS will provide career counselling, job placement assistance, and networking opportunities, ensuring a smooth entry into the workforce.

In summary, AFOS is thrilled to launch this pioneering initiative in Africa, dedicated to shaping the future of eye care on the continent. With the support of organizations like VOSH, AFOS is well-positioned to achieve its goals and make a lasting impact on improving eye health across Africa. You can join AFOS using this link (<https://forms.gle/ZzaEVffYvzsHJx697>) or contact us via the email below:

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