

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Quality Assurance Committee

**DATE:** May 11, 2020

**SUBJECT:** 8.0 Updated Accreditation Policy

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**Purpose:**

To review proposed changes to the Quality Assurance Committee's Continuing Education Accreditation Policy and the newly developed checklist for accrediting Continuing Education Activities.

**Background:**

The accreditation process strives to ensure that high quality continuing education is available for all opticians. Accreditation indicates that the accreditation team (professional members of the Quality Assurance Committee) has reviewed the material and determined it to be optician specific and containing an acceptable amount of eyeglass, contact lens, refracting or professional growth content in order to facilitate optician engagement in the Quality Assurance Program.

Currently, when an accreditation request is received from a continuing education provider, the material is reviewed and accreditation decisions are based on content, length, biography of the presenter(s) and other criteria, as outlined in the accreditation policy.

CE accreditation applies for 3 years from the date the activity is accredited. All accredited activities are eligible for a one-time renewal of 3 additional years when the request is submitted 60 days before expiry.

**For Consideration:**

At its meeting on April 6, 2020, the QA Committee reviewed the process of accrediting continuing education and considered whether the process should be outsourced to an external body that specializes in accreditation. The committee determined that professional members of the Quality Assurance Committee would continue to accredit continuing education (CE) materials at this time. The Committee recommended updating the policy and developing a comprehensive checklist for the professional members to refer to when reviewing materials.

The Committee has proposed to update the accreditation policy (**APPENDIX A**) to include the following criteria:

1. CE providers must identify the competencies covered with the activity.
2. CE providers must demonstrate that CE presenters have relied upon objective, neutral and reliable sources to support the course content.
3. CE content must have as its primary purpose, the advancement of professional competency and scientific knowledge in the practice of opticianry and must not primarily be for the purpose of endorsing a specific product or brand.

A further revision has been proposed to allow CE providers to request a review of the QAC decision in writing within 30 days of the receipt of notice that the QAC has refused accreditation. Under the current policy, CE providers may only request a review where they can provide additional information in support of their request. Requests for review would continue to be subject to an accreditation review fee.

No changes have been proposed at this time with respect to the process for renewing accredited CE activities. Accordingly, CE activities that were accredited under the existing policy would remain eligible for a one-time renewal of an additional 3 years without being subject to further review by the QAC. The QAC will consider whether amendments should be made to the renewal requirements for current and future activities if the proposed updates are approved by the Board.

A CE review checklist was also developed to assist the Committee in its accreditation review. (**APPENDIX B**). The comprehensive checklist is intended as a resource that professional members of the QA Committee will use to ensure the criteria is met when accrediting continuing education activities.

Feedback on the changes was sought from the two major Continuing Education providers. Both CE providers were generally in favour of the proposed changes and agreed that they did not believe the College should accredit CE content that was essentially a “commercial” for a particular device or brand. One of the CE providers expressed, however, that it felt that it remained important for the College to continue to accredit CE activities that addressed specific products, as long as the presentation was technical in nature and aimed at educating opticians about product design and use, rather than price or competitive advantage.

**Recommendation:**

To discuss and approve updated Accreditation Policy and comprehensive checklist as recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee.



## Quality Assurance Policy

## Continuing Education (CE) Accreditation Policy

As set out in the Regulations,<sup>1</sup> the College of Opticians of Ontario's (the College) Quality Assurance program consists of Continuing Education (CE) designed to promote the continuing competence and continuing quality improvement of optician registrants. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is responsible for administering the Quality Assurance (QA) Program and determining which CE activities achieve the objectives of the program.

This policy outlines for CE providers the process and criteria by which the QAC will recognize CE as "accredited" activities. The QAC accredits CE solely for the purpose of ensuring that high quality CE is available in order to facilitate registrant engagement in the QA Program. Accreditation of CE does not indicate College endorsement of any products, services or companies associated with the accredited activity.

### Accreditation Process and Criteria

The QAC will consider requests for CE accreditation in the following delivery formats: live presentations (e.g. seminars, lectures, workshops); live-broadcast presentations (e.g. webinar); and distance learning (e.g. internet, videos, print). From time to time, as it deems necessary, the QAC may consult qualified third party professionals to determine whether a CE activity meets the criteria below. CE providers that wish to change the delivery format of an accredited CE activity (e.g. from live presentation to distance learning) must resubmit the course material to the QAC for approval.

The following process and criteria apply to the accreditation of CE activities in **all** delivery formats:

1. The activity must be an organized, evidence-based program that will contribute to the advancement of professional competency and scientific knowledge in the practice of opticianry, and be designed to reflect the educational needs of registrants.
2. CE providers must identify the competencies covered within the activity (see NACOR Appendix or National Competencies for Canadian Opticians, 4th edition)
3. Course content must be presented in an objective manner.
4. Course content must not include any material considered discriminatory under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and/or unprofessional.
5. Accreditation will only be granted to activities that are available to all registrants of the College.
6. ~~CE providers must ensure course content is validated.~~ ensure that CE presenters demonstrate that they have relied upon objective, neutral and reliable sources to support the course content.

<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

- 5.7. ~~CE content must not contain proprietary and/or commercial materials.~~ have as its primary purpose the advancement of professional competency and scientific knowledge in the practice of opticianry, and must not primarily be for the purpose of endorsing a specific product or brand.
- 6.8. Requests for accreditation must be accompanied by an accreditation request form and the accreditation review fee or renewal fee. The accreditation fee is non-refundable, regardless of the QAC's accreditation decision, and is charged in accordance with the College's by-laws and the review timeline requested by the provider.
- 7.9. New CE accreditation requests must be substantially different from any previous CE submission by the same provider.
- 8.10. The CE provider must ensure that all material submitted to the QAC for accreditation is an exact copy of what is actually presented to registrants.
- 9.11. An acceptable CE presenter must be either: a) a *registered* optician, medical doctor, optometrist; b) an instructor at a recognized academic institution; or c) have at least five years of work experience in their field of specialization.
- 10.12. An acceptable CE presenter must not engage in conduct or behaviour that is unprofessional and/or discriminatory.
- 11.13. Accreditation granted by the QAC applies for three years from the date the activity is accredited. Accredited activities are eligible for a one-time renewal of three additional years. Renewals must be submitted to the QAC at least 60 days before the expiry date.
- 12.14. CE providers shall supply registrants who participate in accredited CE activities with verification of attendance documentation, which serves as evidence of successful completion of the CE activity.
- 13.15. The CE must be approved as accredited by the QAC at the time the course is offered (i.e. the QAC will not back-date any accreditations).
- 14.16. The promotion and advertising of CE seminars and conferences must adhere to the criteria as outlined below.

### Professional and Anti-Discriminatory Expectations

In accordance with criteria 4.3 required of all accredited CE activities, presentation material must not contain any unprofessional or discriminatory content. Any unprofessional and/or discriminatory material identified in an accreditation request will be brought to the attention of the continuing education provider for revision prior to any accreditation decision being made by the QAC.

<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

In addition, the QAC expects all CE presenters to act in a professional manner at all times during the presentation of an accredited activity. CE presenter behaviour will be monitored as outlined in the ongoing accreditation monitoring section of this policy.

The QAC reserves the right to determine what material and/or presenter behaviour is classified as unprofessional or discriminatory.

### **Live and Live-Broadcast Presentations Criteria**

In addition to the requirements for all CE, the following criteria are specific to CE that is delivered in-person (e.g. seminars, lectures, workshops) or by live-broadcast (e.g. webinar):

1. CE in this category must consist of a minimum actual presentation time (not including set-up or question and answer period) as follows:

<b>CE Actual Presentation Time</b>	<b>Question and Answer Period</b>	<b>Accredited CE Value Awarded</b>
At least 25 minutes	5 minutes	½ hour
At least 50 minutes	10 minutes	1 hour
At least 80 minutes	10 minutes	1 ½ hour
At least 110 minutes	10 minutes	2 hours

2. Submissions must include: A biography or curriculum vitae submitted for every presenter; and a complete copy of all media that will be presented (e.g. PowerPoint presentation, videos, etc); and complete information about how the CE provider will endeavor to make the CE available to all Ontario opticians
3. In the case of a **practical workshop**, submissions must include: a list of all of the equipment that is to be used, and the individuals that will provide instruction or guidance at each workstation.
4. In the case of a **live-broadcast**, submissions must include: information satisfactory to the QAC about how optician participation will be tracked (e.g. monitoring registrant log-in/log-out, optician participation in chat forum, etc.)

<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

**Distance Learning Criteria**

In addition to the requirements for all CE, the following criteria are specific to CE that is delivered via distance learning formats (e.g. internet, videos, print):

1. CE in this category must consist of written course material that is a minimum of 2000 words or 50 minutes of audio content. Every 2000 words or 50 minutes of audio content will be considered for 1 accredited CE hour.
2. Submissions must include: a detailed description outlining the proposed course content; and a means of assessing optician participation in the CE activity (e.g. a test). Any assessment must contain materials that accurately reflect the activity's content. The submission must also include complete information about how the CE provider will endeavor to make the CE available to all Ontario opticians.
3. Opticians engaging in distance learning CE must achieve a minimum score of 70% on any assessment in order to receive the verification of attendance documentation.

**Verification of Attendance Documentation Requirements**

Verification of attendance documentation ensures that opticians are able to accurately track completion of their own CE activities, and are able to provide evidence to the College about their compliance with the QA program requirements.

CE providers must ensure that a registrant has actually attended or participated in 80% of the CE in order to issue the registrant a verification of attendance document.

All CE providers are required to supply opticians with verification of attendance documentation upon satisfactory completion of accredited CE. CE providers may design their own documentation, provided that it contains the following information:

1. The full name, College registration number, and signature of the optician who participated in the activity;
2. The title of the activity and the accreditation activity number assigned by the College;
3. The name of the CE provider, the name of the CE provider's representative, along with their signature and contact information.

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<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

**CE Provider Records**

The College encourages CE providers to maintain and ensure the availability of attendance records to opticians and the College. The College would recommend that CE providers retain records for a period of 6 years.

**Ongoing Accreditation Monitoring**

To ensure the quality, accuracy and professionalism of CE after the materials have been accredited by the QAC, the College may send a representative to attend an accredited activity to ensure presentation content is consistent with the original submission and that presenters are acting in a professional manner at all times while presenting accredited activities. If any inconsistencies between the submission and the presentation are observed or where unprofessional and/or discriminatory content is identified, the QAC will provide the CE provider with notice of its concerns and ask for a resolution. In some cases, the QAC may suspend the accreditation granted until all concerns are resolved.

Where serious concerns present themselves or where a CE provider is unable to rectify any concerns identified by the QAC, the QAC may provide the CE provider with notice of its intention to rescind the accreditation. The QAC reserves the right to suspend accreditation during the notice period. The CE provider will be given at least 30 days to resolve the concerns to the QAC's satisfaction. If the concerns are not resolved by the end of the notice period, the QAC will rescind the accreditation and notify the CE provider.

The CE provider must provide the College with all dates and times of an accredited activity occurring within the first year of the activity's accreditation in order to provide the QAC with the opportunity to have a representative attend the activity.

**Promotion and Advertising of Accredited CE**

CE providers of accredited activities offered in Ontario are encouraged to make reasonable attempts to notify all opticians in Ontario of the availability of their CE activities. It is recommended that promotional materials include: information about the educational objectives of the CE, the target audience, the name of the presenter and their credentials, and a complete description of the steps the optician must take to successfully complete the CE.

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<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

### Accreditation Categories

The QAC will accredit CE activities for the following categories:

1. **Eyeglasses (EG):** Content may include, but is not limited to: fabrication, fitting techniques, emerging technology, and product specific topics related to eyeglasses.
2. **Contact Lens (CL):** CE content may include, but is not limited to: fabrication, fitting techniques, emerging technology, and product specific topics related to contact lenses.
3. **Eyeglass/Contact Lens (EG/CL):** CE content may include, but is not limited to: ocular anatomy; physiology of the eye; ocular structures and systems; visual anomalies and the impact on dispensing to patients; low vision evaluation and dispensing; and patient management. Topics in this category would not be product specific.
4. **Eyeglass/Contact Lens/Refraction (EG/CL/RF):** CE content may include, but is not limited to: ocular anatomy; physiology of the eye; the visual pathway; ocular structures and systems; pharmacology and impact on dispensing to patients; accommodation and vision acuity evaluation (including ophthalmic instruments used to evaluate visual acuity); ocular motility; visual anomalies and the impact on dispensing to the patient; low vision evaluation and dispensing; and patient management. Topics in this category would not be product specific.
5. **Professional Growth (PG):** CE content may include but is not limited to topics associated with professional practice such as patient relations, regulatory updates, health and safety, jurisprudence, communications, economic trends to adapt to change, business management, CPR & first aid courses

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<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i



### Accreditation Decisions

The QAC may approve, defer or refuse accreditation. The QAC may defer making a decision about accreditation if it believes additional information is required, in which case, the QAC will require the submission of outstanding information within 15 days. A second review fee will not be charged.

The QAC may refuse accreditation to a CE activity if the activity is deemed insufficient, in terms of either its quality, content or in its duration, or if the QAC determines that the CE does not comply with the accreditation criteria. In cases where the QAC refuses accreditation, it will provide the CE provider with reasons for the refusal. The CE provider may request a review of the QAC decision in writing if new information about the CE can be provided within 30 days of receipt of notice that the QAC has refused accreditation. The review is subject to an Accreditation review fee is applicable to any subsequent review.

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<sup>1</sup> RHPA, s. 80.1(a)(i) and O. Reg 219/94 8.(1)i

## Accreditation Checklist

Criteria	Yes	No	N/A	Notes/Comments
<b>Content is evidence based</b>				
Course contents are supported by data				
The sources for the data are cited				
The sources cited are reliable (e.g. peer reviewed scientific journal or periodical, ophthalmic texts, or other reliable sources), sources are reasonably current and objective (i.e. not sponsored by a person or company with a financial interest in the product)				
The contents avoid making unfounded/ unsupported assertions				
<b>Content relates to RO competencies</b>				
The course content reasonably relates to identified competencies for ROs				
<b>Content is presented in an objective manner</b>				
Material is presented objectively				
The contents are presented in a manner that is balanced/neutral				
Material is generic in nature				
<b>Speaker/Presenter validation</b>				
The CE provider has ensured that the CE presenter has relied upon objective, neutral and reliable sources to support the course content				
<b>Speakers/Presenters meet specified criteria</b>				
Speaker/presenter is either (a) Registered optician, optometrist or medical doctor OR (b) instructor at a recognized academic institution OR (c) at least 5 years experience in field of specialization				
Speaker/presenter has not previously been reported for engaging in unprofessional or discriminatory conduct during a previous CE presentation.				
<b>Content is not discriminatory or unprofessional</b>				
Text used is professional and free of content that could considered discriminatory on the basis of factors such as race, gender, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc.				
Images used are professional and free of content that could considered discriminatory on the basis of factors such as race, gender, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc.				
<b>Availability</b>				
CE is Available to all Registered Opticians				

## Accreditation Checklist

Proprietary/commercial content				
The course has as its primary purpose the advancement of professional competency and scientific knowledge in the practice of opticianry, and is not primarily for the purpose of endorsing a specific product or brand.				