

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario

2023 Fair Registration Practices Report

Prepared for the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC)



FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER
COMMISSAIRE À L'ÉQUITÉ

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1. Background

Under section 20 of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA), which is substantially similar to section 22.7(1) of Schedule 2 of the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA),

“A regulated profession shall prepare a fair registration practices report annually or at such other times as the Fairness Commissioner may specify or at such times as may be specified in the regulations”.

Section 23 of FARPACTA and Section 22.9 of Schedule 2 of the RHPA then go on to indicate that the Fairness Commissioner shall specify the form in which these reports shall be prepared, along with the required filing dates. This section also stipulates that a regulator must make these reports public.

It is pursuant to these authorities that the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) has required that each regulator complete its 2023 Fair Registration Practices Report (FRP).

Please note that this report covers the time-period from January 1 to December 31, 2023.

The FRP:

- Collects information about the organization, applicants to the profession and current membership.
- Provides information to the public about how the organization has implemented fair registration practices during the reporting period.
- Helps the OFC to successfully undertake the education and compliance activities which include monitoring, applying a risk-informed compliance framework, assessing performance, and sharing best practices.
- Determines whether the regulator is complying with recently enacted legislative and regulatory provisions designed to reduce barriers for domestic labour mobility and internationally trained applicants.
- Identifies trends across regulated professions and regulated health colleges.

Please note that the 2023 version of the FRP has changed from the previous version in terms of both form and content as the OFC’s enabling statutes have evolved and as the office migrates to a more permanent portal-enabled database solution.

2. Organization information

Organization name	College of OPTICIANS of Ontario
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3. Registration requirements

Applicants to the regulated professions and compulsory trades must fulfil registration requirements to practice their profession or use a professional title. This section summarizes registration requirements for each profession or trade regulated by College of OPTICIANS of Ontario

Licensing requirements (brief description for each requirement listed):

Profession/ Trade Name	Optician
Academic requirement	The academic requirements for registration are set out in the College's Registration Regulation. To satisfy the academic requirement for registration as a registered optician, the applicant must have completed an approved Ontario opticianry program specified in the Registration Regulation; or have completed a program deemed equivalent to an approved program noted above by the Registration Committee. Applicants who do not meet the above requirements or are

	<p>unable to provide documentary evidence of meeting these requirements undergo an assessment of their prior learning and experience. To satisfy the academic requirement for registration as an intern optician, the applicant must have completed an approved Ontario opticianry program specified in the Registration Regulation; or has applied for a certificate of registration as a registered optician and has been ordered by the Registration Committee to complete additional training and/or specified examinations and has completed the training but not the examinations. The latter applies to applicants undergoing an assessment of their prior learning and skills. To satisfy the academic requirement for registration as a registered student optician, the applicant must be enrolled in an approved Ontario opticianry program specified in the Registration Regulation; or has applied for a certificate of registration as a registered optician or as a registered intern optician and is in the process of completing additional training ordered by the Registration Committee. The latter applies to applicants undergoing an assessment of their prior learning and skills.</p>
<p>Experience requirement</p>	<p>Applicants for a certificate of registration as a registered optician are required to demonstrate completion of 1000 verified dispensing hours, 250 eyeglass fittings and 20 contact lens fittings. All dispensing hours and</p>

	fittings must be supervised by an authorized dispenser in the jurisdiction where the dispensing/fittings occur and may be completed in any jurisdiction.
Language requirement	As set out in the Registration Regulation, it is a requirement for any class of certificate of registration that the applicant must be able to speak and write either English or French with reasonable fluency. The criteria for language proficiency are further set out in the Language Proficiency Policy. The policy includes all language tests approved by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).
Additional information on licensing requirements (may include links to appropriate page on regulator website):	

4. Third party assessments

Third party organizations that assess qualifications on behalf of the regulator.

Organization name	Function
National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR)	Prior learning and recognition
National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR)	Knowledge based exam
World Education Services (WES)	Academic credential evaluation
National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR)	OSCE / Skill based exam

Fair access legislation requires regulators to take reasonable measures to ensure that any third parties undertake assessment of qualifications in a way that is transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario takes the following measure(s) to ensure fair and timely assessments:

The College regularly evaluates and monitors WES assessment practices with respect to applicants who used the WES evaluation services. All reports received from WES are reviewed by the College staff for consistency and to identify any gaps or anomalies. The national examinations are administered jointly by the College and NACOR, and the dates and locations of the examinations are jointly agreed on to ensure timely assessment. In 2023, the College and NACOR held three examination sessions, including a bilingual session in Ottawa. To ensure the examinations are conducted in an objective manner and provide a fair and transparent experience for all applicants, the College appoints a National Examination Committee representative to participate in an annual review of the examinations and a chief examiner to attend all examinations on behalf of the College to address concerns raised by candidates. The College also holds post-examination debrief sessions with NACOR staff to evaluate the current process and to address areas of concern. Additionally, the College utilizes feedback from applicants to monitor the effectiveness of the existing processes and to identify areas of improvement.

5. Accomplishments, risks and mitigations

Key accomplishments and risks pertaining to fair registration practices during the reporting period are summarized below.

A. Accomplishments

1	Timely decisions. Over 80% of applications in every registration category received a registration decision within 30 days or less.
2	Extensive policy development and review. In 2023, three new registration policies were developed arising from the upcoming amendments to the Registration Regulation: Currency of Practice Policy; Practicum Policy; and

	Reinstatement and Changing from Inactive to Active Practice Policy. Additionally, the following registration policies were reviewed and/or revised to ensure that they are consistent and effective, and that the College is up to date with current regulations and regulatory best practices: Language Proficiency Policy; Examination and Upgrading Policy; Internationally Educated Applicants Policy; Retention of Legal and Verifying Documents Policy; Contact Lens Mentor Policy; and Contact Lens Fittings Policy.
3	The launch of a Pre-Arrival Readiness Tool for internationally educated/trained applicants. This tool was developed in collaboration with the National Alliance of Canadian Opticianry Regulators and is designed to assist potential applicants to identify the best pathway to opticianry licensure based on their knowledge and experience.

B. Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation Measure
Constraints under O. Reg 869/93 (Registration Regulation under the Opticianry Act, 1991).	The College's current Registration Regulation includes several provisions that preclude or impede the College from streamlining registration processes. For example, the Regulation includes rigid and, at times, outdated practical experience requirements, limits access to PLAR, and precludes formal approval of new educational programs. In 2017, the College submitted amendments to the Registration Regulation to the Ministry of Health. The amendments were recently approved to come into force on July 1, 2024, which will reduce and/or eliminate the risks identified. In the meantime, various mitigation measures have been implemented via policy to ensure timely registration practices and fair access to PLAR.

6. Changes to registration practices

During the January 1 to December 31, 2023 reporting period, College of OPTICIANS of Ontario has introduced the following changes impacting its registration processes. Changes, anticipated impacts, and risk mitigation are summarized below.

A. Registration requirements and practices

Registration process	Changes Made (Yes / No)	Description
Registration requirements either through regulation, by-law or policy	No	
Timelines for registration, decisions and/or responses	Yes	The Registration Timelines Policy was updated to reflect new requirements under the Registration Requirements Regulation.
Assessment of qualifications, including competency-based assessments and examinations	Yes	In 2023, a new PLAR assessment tool was launched. The new tool is a multiple-choice assessment based on the National Competencies for Canadian Opticians. The assessment consists of two sections: Eyeglasses and Contact Lenses. The new tool eliminates the previous competency-based interview component from the assessment.
Documentation requirements for registration	No	
Changes to internal review or appeal process	No	

New or consolidated class of certificates or licenses	Yes	Emergency Class of registration, which came into force on August 31, 2023.
Registration and/or assessment fees	Yes	Updates to the PLAR assessment tool (outlined above) resulted in lower overall costs to administer the assessment. As a result, PLAR fees were reduced by 40% to reflect these efficiencies.
Access by applicants to their records	No	

B. Training, policy and applicant supports

Registration process	Changes Made (Yes / No)	Description
Resources or training to support applicants to move through the licensing process	No	
Training and resources for staff who deal with registration issues	No	
Anti-racism and inclusion-based policies and practices	Yes	The 2023-2025 College Strategic Plan includes goals, strategies, and action steps for ensuring a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) lens is applied to all policies and processes. The College is committed to processes and services that are fair, relational, and accessible to all registrants, applicants, and the public (Goal 2.2). DEI principles have been integrated into the College’s internal governance structure and decision-making processes (Goal 3.2).

C. System partners

Registration process	Changes Made (Yes / No)	Description
Accreditation of educational programs	No	
Mutual recognition agreements	No	
Steps to increase accountability of third-party service provider(s)	No	

D. Responsiveness to changes in the regulatory environment

Registration process	Changes Made (Yes / No)	Description
Other	No	
Emergency registration plans	Yes	With the new Emergency Class of registration in place, the College's Board of Directors or the Government of Ontario could request the College to issue certificates of registration under the emergency class if it is in the public interest to do so.
Technological or digital improvements	No	
Steps to address labour shortages in the profession or trade	Yes	In 2023 the College continued to gather data on labour trends in the profession by: co-hosting a stakeholder roundtable session in 2023 to hear from regulations, educations, industry members and associations across the

		country on registration trends; engaging Leger to carry out a survey of patients across Canada on access to opticianry services.
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7. Membership and application data

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner collects membership and application data from regulators through annual Fair Registration Practices Reports, which are also made available to the public. Information is collected for the purpose of discerning statistical changes and trends related to a regulator’s membership, application volumes, licensure/certification results, and appeals year over year.

A. Race-based data collected

	Race-based data collected? (Yes or No)
Members	No
Applicants	No

Additional description:

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B. Other identity-based or demographic data collected

	Other identity-based or demographic data collected? (Yes or No)
Members	Yes
Applicants	Yes

Additional description:

Gender identity; languages spoken

C. Languages of service provision

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario makes application materials and information available to applicants in the following languages.

Language	Yes / No
English	Yes
French	Yes
Other (please specify)	

D. Membership Profile

Profession Name	Total Number of Members
Optician	3483

Class of License	Total Number of Members	Total Number of Internationally Educated Members
Full / General/ Independent Practice	3300	87
Intern Opticians	174	8
Student Opticians	9	3

Gender	Number of Members
Male	1336
Female	2146
X (includes trans, non-binary, and two-spirit people)	1

Jurisdiction of Initial Training	Number of Members
Ontario	3014
Other provinces and territories	371
United States	10
Other International	88

Country of Initial Training	Number of Members
Canada	3385
India	27
Iran	11
United States of America	10
Philippines	7
United Kingdom	5
Nigeria	5
China	4
France	3
Hong Kong	3
Poland	2
Algeria	1
Austria	1
Cameroon	1
Colombia	1
Brazil	1
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Ukraine	1
Egypt	1
Germany	1
Iraq	1
Israel	1
Russia	1
Italy	1
Jordan	1
Kazakhstan	1
Tunisia	1

Romania	2
Japan	2
Netherlands	1

Official language of preference	Number of Members
English	3421
French	62

Racial identity (optional)	Number of Members
Not collected	3483

E. Data Notes

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F. Applicant Profile

Profession Name	Total Number of Applicants
Optician	347

Gender	Number of Applicants
Male	158
Female	189
X (includes trans, non-binary, and two-spirit people)	0

Jurisdiction of Initial Training	Applications received in 2023	Applications with decisions pending
Ontario	309	5
Other provinces and territories	21	0
United States	0	0
Other International	17	3

Country of Initial Training	Number of Applicants
India	9
Hong Kong	1
Brazil	1
Iran	3
Philippines	1
United Kingdom	1
Iraq	1
Canada	330

Official language of preference	Number of Members
English	329
French	18

Racial identity (optional)	Number of Members
Not collected	347

G. Data Notes

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H. Application Decisions

The table below summarizes the outcome of registration decisions finalized in 2023. Some applications may have been received in the previous year.

Jurisdiction of initial training	Successful	Unsuccessful	Withdrawn
Ontario	347	0	3
Other provinces and territories	24	0	0
United States	0	0	0
Other International	11	0	0

I. New Registrants

For the 2023 reporting year, the breakdown of new registrants by class of registration is provided below:

Class of registration	Total new registrants by class	Number of internationally educated registrants
Full / General/ Independent Practice	177	1
Intern Opticians	202	8
Student Optician	3	2

J. Data Notes

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K. Reviews and Appeals

Applicants for registration may appeal a registration decision. An **internal review or appeal** involves formal reconsideration of a registration decision further to an application and submissions by the applicant.

Jurisdiction of initial training	Number of internal reviews and appeals processed	Number of decisions changed following internal review or appeal
Ontario	0	0
Other provinces and territories	0	0
United States	0	0
Other International	0	0
Multiple Jurisdictions	0	0

An **external review or appeal** involves review of a registration decision by an external appeal tribunal or court, such as the Health Professions Review and Appeal Board or Divisional Court.

Jurisdiction of initial training	Number of applicants who sought external review or appeal	Number of decisions changed following external review or appeal
Ontario	0	0
Other provinces and territories	0	0
United States	0	0
Other International	0	0
Multiple Jurisdictions	0	0

Issues raised in reviews and appeals can point to challenges in the registration process. The table below summarizes top issues or reasons that applicants raised during these appeal proceedings.

Issue or reason raised	Number of appeals

Internationally trained applicants face additional challenges in the registration process. The table below summarizes top reasons for not registering internationally trained individuals.

Reason for not registering	Number of internationally trained applicants

L. Data Notes

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8. Changes Related to New Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

By Ontario law, regulated occupations must provide registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair. Non-health occupations are governed by the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA)*, while health professions are governed by the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 2011 (RHPA)*.

In 2021, both statutes were amended to incorporate substantive provisions to:

- A.** Eliminate the use of Canadian experience requirements except under prescribed circumstances.
- B.** Streamline language proficiency testing requirements.
- C.** Provide for the continuity of registration processes during emergency situations.
- D.** Set registration time limits. (FARPACTA only)

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario has made the following changes to comply with these new legal obligations:

A. Canadian Experience

Change required: No changes required

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario has taken the following measures to comply with legislative requirements on eliminating Canadian experience requirements unless an exemption is granted or an alternative is identified that meets criteria prescribed in regulations (non-health regulators) or the exceptions in legislation are met (regulated health colleges).

B. Language Proficiency Testing

Change required: Yes

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario has taken the following measures to comply with recent legislative changes requiring that regulators accept language proficiency testing results derived from any of the tests accepted for immigration purposes to satisfy their language proficiency requirements:

The Language Proficiency Policy was revised to include the language proficiency tests accepted by the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada for immigration purposes.

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario offers applicants the following options to demonstrate language proficiency.

- IELTS (General)
- CELPIP (General)
- TEF Canada
- TCF Canada
- Other language proficiency tests
- Education in English or French

C. Emergency Registration

Change required: Yes

College of OPTICIANS of Ontario has taken the following measures to comply with requirements to establish an emergency class (health colleges) or develop an emergency registration plan (non-health regulators).

The College's Registration Regulation was updated to include the new emergency class of registration. The emergency class came into force on August 31, 2023.

Glossary of terms

Applicant: An individual who has applied for membership in a regulated profession or compulsory trade, with the associated rights to practice their profession / trade or use a professional title.

Domestic labour mobility: Applications subject to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which stipulates that a certificate issued by one province or territory should be recognized by all others unless there is an exception due to public health, safety and security reasons.

Internationally educated / trained: An individual whose initial professional education was not from a Canadian educational institution, or who is applying for trade certification based on experience gained outside Canada. This category includes individuals with education / training in the US and other countries. It also includes individuals who completed their initial professional education outside Canada and later addressed gaps with courses or a bridging program based in Canada.

Jurisdiction of initial training: For professions, the jurisdiction in which an applicant obtained their initial professional education used in full or partial fulfilment of registration requirements. For trades, the jurisdiction of initial trade experience listed on a Trades Equivalency Assessment (TEA) application.

Member: An individual who has satisfied the conditions for registration in their profession / trade and has been granted the right to practice and/or the right to use a professional designation or title. Members may hold a full license to engage in independent practice, or they may hold an alternate class of registration.

Racial identity: Voluntary self-report data of racial identity as a social description. Follows categories identified in the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate Data <<https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism>> .

Registration requirements: the entry-to-practice requirements that that an applicant must meet to be granted full membership in a regulated profession or trade, with the associated right to practice or right to use a professional title.

- **Academic requirement:** The formal education, or equivalent, that is required for licensing or certification in a particular regulated profession or trade.
- **Experience requirement:** The experiential training or work experience that is required for licensing or certification in a particular regulated profession or trade.
- **Language requirement:** The level of language proficiency that is required for licensing or certification in a particular regulated profession or trade, and the language proficiency tests accepted in fulfillment of this requirement.

Third party service provider: An external organization that assesses applicant qualifications on behalf of the regulator.