

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Registration Committee

DATE: September 23, 2024

SUBJECT: 8.2 Examination and Upgrading Policy
APPENDIX A: Draft Examination and Upgrading Policy

For Decision

For Information

Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To approve proposed amendments to the Examination and Upgrading Policy.

Background:

The Examination and Upgrading Policy defines eligibility for the national examination for accredited education candidates, unaccredited education candidates, as well as candidates seeking registration in other Canadian provinces, and sets out the process to regain eligibility for the national examinations for candidates who made three unsuccessful examination attempts or exceeded their three-year eligibility period. The policy also includes the upgrading proposal guidelines for the examination candidates.

The new Registration Regulation that came into force on July 1, 2024, brings changes to the entry-to-practice requirements and sets limits on the number of examination attempts. The new regulation also no longer includes the student optician class of registration.

Under the new regulation, Intern Opticians continue to have three attempts (or three years) to pass the National Examinations, after which they must complete upgrading measures before attempting the exams again. Intern Opticians who fail the exams a fourth time are now required to complete a fresh opticianry program before re-attempting the exams.

For Consideration:

The Examination and Upgrading Policy was revised to align with the requirements and changes of the new regulation noted above, namely the examination eligibility criteria for accredited and unaccredited program candidates, examination attempts, and student registration. The policy has also been streamlined to enhance overall clarity and readability.

The draft policy is attached as **Appendix A**.

Public Interest Considerations:

The proposed revisions to the policy ensure that the policy complies with the requirements of the new Registration Regulation and that the process for meeting the examination eligibility requirements is transparent and set out clearly in the policy.

The revisions also provide public protection by enhancing the mechanism through which the Registration Committee can evaluate and address intern opticians who have failed the examination three or four times and may have deficits that require attention.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations:

The Registration Committee did not identify any concerns from a diversity, equity, or inclusion perspective relating to the proposed changes to the policy.

Risk Management Considerations:

Continually monitoring registration policies and ensuring their alignment with the regulatory requirements helps to identify, analyze, and address potential organizational risks before they negatively impact the College.

Recommendation/Action Required:

That the Board approve the proposed amendments to the Examinations and Upgrading Policy.

REGISTRATION POLICY

Examination and Upgrading

Examination Requirement

It is a non-exemptible requirement under Section 7(1)3 of Ontario Regulation 32/24, that an applicant for a certificate of registration as a Registered Optician must have,

“achieved a passing mark in each section of the College’s examinations, including examinations about contact lenses, or must have successfully completed examinations which are determined by the Registration Committee to be equivalent to the College’s examinations.”

The College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) recognizes the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators’ (NACOR) National Examinations as the entry-to-practice examinations. Individuals must complete both the contact lens and eyeglass examinations in order to qualify for a certificate of registration as a registered optician in Ontario.

Examination Eligibility

The COO determines the eligibility of examination candidates in Ontario. Candidates are deemed to be eligible for the examination in the following circumstances:

1. **Accredited Education Candidates:** Candidates who complete their education at an opticianry program accredited by the College will be eligible for the examinations upon:
 - a. Successful completion and graduation from an accredited opticianry program;
 - b. Successful completion of the practicum/practical experience requirement; and
 - c. Successful registration with the COO as an Intern Optician.
2. **Unaccredited Education Candidates:** Candidates who complete their opticianry education at an unaccredited program, including education programs completed outside Canada, will be eligible for the examinations upon:
 - a. Successful completion of a prior learning assessment approved by the Registration Committee;
 - b. Successful completion of any additional training required by the Registration Committee; and
 - c. Successful registration with the COO as an Intern Optician.
3. **Candidates Seeking Registration in Other Provinces:** Candidates seeking registration in other provinces will be eligible for the examinations upon confirmation of eligibility by their home province. Examination results will be provided by NACOR to the home province.

Limits on Eligibility

Candidates are eligible to attempt the National Examinations 3 times within the 3-year period from the time they first become eligible. A candidate who fails the registration examinations a fourth time will be required to complete a fresh opticianry program before attempting the examinations again.

After 3 years and/or 3 unsuccessful attempts, steps must be taken by the candidate to extend their examination eligibility, as follows:

1. Submit a **written request** to the College to be reissued a certificate of registration as an intern optician for the purpose of re-attempting the National Examinations. This request should be submitted to registration@collegeofopticians.ca. The following information must be included with the written request:
 - a. Details of any additional opticianry-related education or work experience that the candidate engaged since they first became eligible for the examinations;
 - b. Where a candidate has failed an examination one or more times, they must also include an **upgrading proposal**, which outlines the candidate proposes to take to address any gaps in knowledge; and
 - c. Payment of the review fee.
2. The Registration Committee will review the candidate's request and issue a decision specifying the **upgrading measures** that the candidate must complete to extend their eligibility.
3. Complete the upgrading measures specified by the Registration Committee and submit **proof** of completion to the College. The upgrading requirements must be completed to the satisfaction of the Registration Committee.

Upgrading Proposal Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to candidates who are required to submit an upgrading proposal in order to reattempt the National Examinations.

1. **Upgrading Proposal:** An upgrading proposal is a proposal that outlines the steps a candidate will undertake to improve their knowledge. The proposal should focus on areas of the examinations where the candidate was unsuccessful or performed poorly. Upgrading steps may include mentoring, tutoring and/or upgrading courses offered by an accredited educational institution. Candidates should identify the steps they propose to take in their proposal and explain how these steps will address gaps in their knowledge.
2. **Upgrading Mentors/Tutors:** If a candidate wishes to pursue a tutoring or mentoring arrangement, the upgrading proposal should be developed by a mentor/tutor selected by the candidate. An acceptable mentor would be a registered optician or an optometrist in good standing, with appropriate knowledge, skill, and judgement in the subject matter.

3. **Upgrading Hours:** Regardless of the type of proposal submitted, the Registration Committee usually expects the candidate to complete a minimum of 100 upgrading hours for each examination for which the candidate is seeking a supplemental attempt.
4. **Contents of Proposal:** A suitable upgrading proposal must demonstrate how the proposed mentoring/tutoring or upgrading courses relate to the examination areas where the candidate was previously unsuccessful or where they performed poorly. The proposal should be sufficiently detailed so that the Registration Committee can determine whether the upgrading will satisfactorily address the individual's areas of weakness.

Completion of Upgrading

The candidate is responsible for submitting acceptable evidence of completion of the upgrading plan for the Registration Committee's consideration.

Satisfactory completion of the approved upgrading plan will result in eligibility for one supplemental examination attempt only. For the purposes of writing the examination, the Registration Committee may extend a certificate of registration as an intern optician for a period specified by the Registration Committee.