

Continuing Education Accreditation Policy

Background

The College of Opticians of Ontario (College) operates a Quality Assurance (QA) Program, which includes continuing education (CE) designed to promote continuing competence and quality improvements amongst registered opticians.

The College's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is responsible for administering the QA Program, and for determining which CE activities achieve the objectives of the program.

Purpose

This policy establishes the criteria and process for accrediting CE activities for the purposes of the College's QA Program.

The QAC accredits CE activities solely for the purpose of facilitating registrant engagement in the QA Program. Accreditation of CE does not indicate the College or QAC's endorsement of any product, service, individual or company associated with the accredited activity.

Policy

A. Accreditation Categories

1. Activities can be accredited in the following categories for the purposes of the College's QA Program:
 - a. **Eyeglasses (EG):** CE content may include, but is not limited to: fabrication, fitting techniques, and emerging technology related to eyeglasses.
 - b. **Contact Lens (CL):** CE content may include, but is not limited to: fabrication, fitting techniques, and emerging technology related to contact lenses.
 - c. **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.
 - d. **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.

- e. **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.
2. The subject matter of the presentation and/or material must be substantially relevant to the applicable category in order to qualify for accreditation in that category. Where a category includes more than one area, the content must reasonably relate to all of the areas within that category.

B. Delivery Formats

1. The QAC will consider requests for CE accreditation in the following delivery formats:
 - a. Live presentations (e.g., seminars, lectures, workshops)
 - b. Live-broadcast presentations (e.g., webinars delivered in real-time)
 - c. Distance Learning (e.g., recorded videos/webinars, written materials, podcasts)
 - d. Scholastic courses and programs
2. CE providers must adhere to the application submission requirements set out in this policy that correspond to the delivery format for which they are seeking accreditation.
3. Should a provider wish to change the delivery format of a CE activity after accreditation has been granted, they must re-submit the material for review by the QAC, together with any other submission requirements that correspond to the new requested format.

C. Accreditation Eligibility Criteria

The following eligibility criteria apply to CE activities in all accreditation categories and delivery formats:

1. The activity must be an organized program that is substantially different from any previous submissions made by the CE provider.
2. The activity must be designed to reflect the educational needs of registrants and must align with the National Competencies for Canadian Opticians (For a detailed list and description of the National Competencies, click [here](#)).
3. The activity must have, as its primary purpose, the advancement of professional competency and knowledge in the practice of opticianry.

4. The activity must not be primarily for the purpose of endorsing a particular product, brand, or service provider.
5. The activity must be presented in an objective and professional manner by a presenter with demonstrated knowledge or expertise in the subject matter of the presentation. The presenter's knowledge or expertise may be demonstrated in any of the following ways:
 - a. They hold a professional registration, license or designation that is directly relevant to the subject matter of the presentation (e.g., registered optician);
 - b. They hold a relevant academic position (e.g., instructor, researcher); and/or
 - c. They have at least five years of work experience in a field or specialization that is directly relevant to the subject matter of the presentation.
6. The activity must comply with the professional and anti-discriminatory expectations outlined in this policy (see section I, below).
7. The promotion and advertising of CE activities must adhere to the criteria set out in this policy.

In addition to the criteria listed above, CE activities in the EG, CL, EG/CL and EG/CL/RF categories must also meet the following criteria:

8. The activity must be evidence-based, and the content must be supported by objective, neutral and reliable sources.
 - a. Experience-based knowledge: Experience-based knowledge refers to teachings or learnings that are based on the presenter's own professional experience. Activities may include experience-based knowledge provided it is for the purpose of encouraging and supporting opticians' critical thinking and professional judgment skills, and not for the purpose of conveying factual knowledge about a particular product, technique, or service. For example, experience-based knowledge may be used for the purposes of reviewing case scenarios, but may not be used to demonstrate the use or effectiveness of a specific optical device.
9. The activity must contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge in relation to the National Competencies for Canadian Opticians.

D. Accreditation Values

1. An accreditation value granted by the QAC is valid for three years from the date of accreditation.

2. Accreditation is granted on a going-forward basis only. Accreditation cannot be granted retrospectively for activities that have already taken place.

3. **Live and Live Broadcast Presentations:**

- a. Accreditation values for live and live broadcast presentations and workshops are granted based on the length of the presentation or workshop, as follows:

| Presentation Time | Question and Answer Period | Value Awarded |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| At least 25 minutes | 5 minutes | ½ hour |
| At least 50 minutes | 10 minutes | 1 hour |
| At least 80 minutes | 10 minutes | 1 ½ hours |
| At least 110 minutes | 10 minutes | 2 hours |

- b. It is the responsibility of the CE provider to ensure that actual presentation or workshop length is consistent with the accreditation value that is applied for and granted. The QAC reserves the right to amend and/or rescind accreditation where the actual presentation/workshop length is significantly different from the accreditation value previously granted.

4. **Distance Learning:** Accreditation values for distance learning activities will be granted based on the following factors:

- a. Written course materials: ½ hour accreditation value per 1000 words of material.
- b. Audio/video materials:

| Presentation Time | Question and Answer Period | Value Awarded |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| At least 25 minutes | 5 minutes | ½ hour |
| At least 50 minutes | 10 minutes | 1 hour |
| At least 80 minutes | 10 minutes | 1 ½ hours |
| At least 110 minutes | 10 minutes | 2 hours |

5. **Scholastic Courses/Programs:** Accreditation values for scholastic courses or programs will be determined based on the total duration of the course/program in its entirety. The CE provider must provide details of the course duration, broken down as follows:

- a. **Instructor-led learning:** the time spent by students receiving in-person or synchronous instruction (e.g., a course lecture) from a live instructor.

- b. **Out-of-class learning:** the time students spend engaging in activities that are assigned to be completed outside of instructor-led learning time (e.g., reading, assignments, review, exam preparation).
- c. **Self-directed learning:** the time spent by students engaging with course materials at their own pace, independently (e.g., an online course that is delivered asynchronously, such as reviewing recorded lectures, participating in online discussion forums, conducting independent research, or working through interactive models).

E. Verification of Attendance/Participation

1. All accredited CE activities must include a method of monitoring registrant attendance/participation and providers must have the ability to provide registrants with a certificate or other documentation to verify attendance and/or satisfactory participation in the activity (Verification Document).
2. Verification Documents must include:
 - a. The full name and College registration number of the optician who participated in the activity.
 - b. Title of the accredited activity and the accreditation number assigned by the College.
 - c. The name of the CE provider, the name of the CE provider's representative, along with their signature, stamp or seal, and contact information.
 - d. Date the CE activity was attended and/or completed by the registrant.
3. **Live and Live Broadcast presentations:** Attendees at live and live broadcast presentations must be present for at least 80% of the presentation to receive a Verification Document.
4. **Distance Learning activities:** All distance learning activities must include a scored assessment that reasonably and accurately evaluates participants' engagement with the materials. Participants must achieve a minimum score of 70% to receive a Verification Document.
5. **Scholastic activities:** All scholastic activities must include an assessment that reasonably and accurately evaluates participants' engagement with the course content. Participants must achieve a passing mark on the assessment to receive a Verification Document.

6. CE providers are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records and for ensuring Verification Documents are provided to participants in a timely manner. The College reserves the right to contact the CE provider directly to confirm the accuracy of Verification Documents. The College recommends that CE providers retain all Verification Documents for a minimum period of 6 years.

F. Application Process

1. Applications for accreditation must include the following information/materials, based on the activity type and/or delivery format:

| | Live Presentation | Live Workshops | Live Broadcast | Distance Learning | Scholastic Courses |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Completed application request form | x | x | x | x | x |
| Exact copies of all written, audio, and visual materials that will be presented to registrants (e.g., written materials, presentation slides, videos, etc.) | x | x | x | x | |
| Duration of the activity and/or each workstation (for live workshops) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Details of how attendance will be tracked | x | x | x | | |
| Mode(s) of assessment/evaluation | | | | x | x |
| Biography or curriculum vitae for every presenter | x | x | x | x | |
| Course outline, including a description of the learning outcomes | | x | | | x |
| List of reference materials and prescribed texts | | | | | x |

2. All applications must be accompanied by payment of the accreditation review fee. The accreditation review fee is non-refundable, regardless of the QAC's decision. The fee is

charged in accordance with the College's by-laws and the review timeline requested by the provider.

G. Consideration and Decisions by the Quality Assurance Committee

1. The QAC may approve, defer, or refuse accreditation.
2. The QAC may defer making a decision about accreditation if it believes additional information is required to support the application. In such cases, the QAC will request that the CE provider submit additional information. No additional review fee will apply where the additional information requested by the QAC is provided within 15 days.
3. The QAC may refuse accreditation in the following circumstances:
 - a. The proposed activity does not comply with one or more of the eligibility criteria or delivery format requirements.
 - b. The proposed activity's duration/length is not sufficient to meet the minimum policy requirements.
 - c. The subject matter of the proposed activity does not align with the accreditation categories outlined in this policy.
4. Where the QAC refuses accreditation, it will provide the CE provider with written reasons for the refusal. The CE provider may request a review of the QAC's decision in writing within 30 days of receipt of notice that accreditation has been refused. The review is subject to a non-refundable accreditation review fee.
5. From time to time, as it deems necessary, the QAC may consult qualified third-party professionals to determine whether a proposed CE activity meets the criteria of this policy.

H. Ongoing Accreditation Monitoring

1. The College may engage in ongoing monitoring to ensure the quality, accuracy, and professionalism of accredited CE activities, including sending a representative to attend or participate in accredited activities.
2. College monitoring may include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following factors:
 - a. Ensuring the presentation and materials are consistent with the materials originally submitted for accreditation.

- b. Ensuring the length of the activity is reasonably consistent with the accreditation value.
 - c. Ensuring presenters comply with the College's expectations for professionalism anti-discriminatory outlined in this policy.
3. Where concerns or inconsistencies arise with an activity as a result of the College's monitoring, or other information that comes to the College's knowledge, the QAC will provide the CE provider with notice of its concerns and, where appropriate, a reasonable opportunity to address/remedy the issue(s).
4. The QAC reserves the right to suspend the accreditation granted to an activity until all concerns are resolved to its satisfaction.
5. In the event that the concerns or issues are not resolved within a reasonable time frame, the QAC may provide the CE provider with notice of its intention to rescind the accreditation. The CE provider will be given at least 30 days to resolve the concerns to the QAC's satisfaction, and the QAC reserves the right to suspend the activity during this notice period. If the concerns are not adequately addressed after the notice period, the QAC may rescind the accreditation and notify the CE provider.
6. An activity that takes place during any period of suspension, or following the date of rescission, may not be claimed by registrants toward their annual QA Program requirements.

I. Expectations on Professionalism and Anti-Discrimination

1. In accordance with section 6 of the eligibility criteria of this policy (Part C), all accredited materials must not include any unprofessional or discriminatory content. This includes any content or material that discriminates against, diminishes, or demeans a person or group based on their identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sex, sexual orientation, age, language, ability levels or physical appearance.
2. In addition, the QAC expects all CE providers 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.
3. Any unprofessional and/or discriminatory content identified in an accreditation request will be brought to the attention of the CE provider for revision prior to any accreditation decision being made by the QAC.
4. Any unprofessional or discriminatory actions by a CE presenter may result in the activity's accreditation being reviewed, suspended and/or rescinded.

