

QA Competency Enhancement Overview

COMPONENTS OF THE QA PROGRAM

To meet its legislative obligations of the Quality Assurance (QA) Committee has developed a [QA Program](#) that consists of three main components:

1. QA Competency Enhancement
2. QA Competency Review and Evaluation (CRE)
3. QA Competency Improvement

QA COMPETENCY ENHANCEMENT

This component includes a variety of portfolio materials that assist opticians in reflecting on their practice, enhancing competence, and demonstrating continuous learning.

Every registered optician in Ontario must complete a minimum of the following Continuing Education (CE) hours* annually including:

- **12 accredited CE hours:**
 - 4 hours specific to contact lens (CL) technology, and
 - 4 hours specific to eyeglass (EG) technology, and
 - 4 hours specific to Professional Growth (PG), and
- **4 non-accredited, self-directed CE hours****

Equating to 16 hours of accredited and non-accredited hours

**Opticians who have a refracting designation from the College are required to submit 2 additional CE hours specific to refraction.*

Changes to QA Competency Enhancement

Professional Growth (PG) is a new accredited category that was introduced and approved by the Quality Assurance Committee after stakeholder feedback in 2019. CE content may include but is not limited to topics associated with professional practice such as patient relations, regulatory updates, health and safety, communications, economic trends to adapt to change, business management, CPR and first aid courses.

The [Jurisprudence Tool Handbook](#) developed by the College also counts toward this category:

- Chapter 1:** Professional Boundaries and Sexual Abuse Prevention
- Chapter 2:** Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy
- Chapter 3:** Communications
- Chapter 4:** Introduction to the RHPA
- Chapter 5:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

THE QA COMPETENCY ENHANCEMENT MATERIALS INCLUDE:

- a) **Annual Professional Portfolio**
 - Competency Self-Assessment
 - Professional Improvement Plan
 - Accredited Continuing Education
- b) **Jurisprudence Professional Boundaries and Sexual Abuse Prevention Self-Evaluation Tool**

PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS FOR NEWLY REGISTERED OPTICIANS

Maintaining an annual Professional Portfolio is a mandatory requirement of QA Competency Enhancement. This collection of documents reflects your career history and demonstrates ongoing learning and maintenance of technical and professional competence. The College developed and implemented the Professional Portfolio as a way for registrants to document self-assessment and continuing education with the aim to sustain competence within opticians.

Date Registered	Accredited CE Required	Unaccredited CE required
January 1 – March 31	12 (100%)	4 (100%)
April 1 – June 30	9 (75%)	3 (75%)
July 1 – September 30	6 (50%)	2 (50%)
October 1 – December 31	3 (25%)	1 (25%)

Newly registered opticians, who have not held registration as a registered optician (RO) in the past, must still complete a Professional Portfolio in the first calendar year of their registration. There are prorated CE requirements for registrants in their first calendar year of registration based on the date of their initial registration (see schedule above). In the second year of registration, registrants will be required to complete all 16 CE activity hours.

This chart does not apply to registrants who are reinstating their RO license. Registrants who have reinstated their license as a RO will need to complete the full 16 hours of CE activities within the first calendar year of reinstatement regardless of when they register in the year.

The completed Portfolio materials must be maintained for 6 years. When randomly selected for QA Competency Review and Evaluation (CRE) or when requested by the QA Committee, opticians are required to submit their completed Portfolio materials to the College. The QA Committee may request two years of completed Portfolios.

JURISPRUDENCE

The purpose of the [Jurisprudence Tool](#) is to help registered opticians acquire knowledge about the laws, standards, and guidelines that affect opticianry in Ontario. **Registrants are required to complete Chapter One: Professional Boundaries and Sexual Abuse Prevention within 12 months of initial registration and then once every 3 years.** You have unlimited attempts to complete the tool and must achieve a minimum passing mark of 80%.

This counts as 1 Professional Growth (PG) hour the year in which it is completed. A certificate is issued when you successfully complete the test which you are required to upload to the Quality Assurance section of your Registrant Portal.

Professional Portfolio Guide

Introduction

The College recommends that all registered opticians complete the Competency Self-Assessment form and start the Professional Improvement Plan: Unaccredited Activity Log in January of each year. The Professional Improvement Plan is not a static document. Update and review it throughout the year as you engage in CE activities and reflect on the skills you have acquired and the changes you have made to your practice.

The Professional Portfolio materials must be completed by December 31st of each year.

The philosophy behind QA Competency Enhancement is one of lifelong learning and the program is based on adult education principles. The Professional Portfolio is one tool the College has developed to support registrants in consciously engaging in continuing education and professional development. This approach allows opticians to choose activities based on their learning style and acknowledges that learning comes from engaging in a variety of activities.

The College recognizes that opticians are:

- **Competent practitioners;**
- **Motivated adult learners;**
- **Able to select and complete CE activities that address individual learning needs; and**
- **Self-directed in acquiring knowledge and/or skills they can apply to practice.**

The Professional Improvement Plan, which focuses on self-directed activities, encourages you to reflect on your professional experience. Self-reflection occurs when you consciously identify a learning need, develop a plan to address that need, and then consider how the new knowledge and skills gained effect the practice.

As a regulated professional, every registrant is responsible for formulating a personal plan for engaging in ongoing education. The plan should include activities and resource material that support relevant to your learning needs. By requiring the development of a professional improvement plan and monitoring ongoing engagement in QA Competency Enhancement, the College ensures the public that opticians consciously engage in continuing education.

Consciously engaging in professional development and self-reflection is a privilege shared by all regulated health professions under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*. It helps the profession to stand apart from unregulated providers. You can use the Portfolio to assist you in:

- **Completing your employment performance review;**
- **Developing your professional integrity;**
- **Interacting effectively with your clients and peers;**
- **Maintaining a safe work environment;**
- **Managing your time and resources well;**
- **Updating yourself on the legal requirements updates;**
- **Updating your resume;**
- **Planning your Professional Development.**

Competency Self-Assessment

Every year you should complete the Competency Self-Assessment form in January. Should your practice or practice environment change, review and update your Self-Assessment form.

As self-regulated professionals, opticians are expected to become proficient in self-assessment. The Competency Self-Assessment form is based on the National Competencies for Canadian Opticians. Engaging in the self-assessment process helps you consider which learning activities you should participate in for the coming year.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE COMPETENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

- There are no right or wrong answers. The College will not score your self-identified rating. This form is solely to encourage self-reflection on your current learning needs.
- With experience, you will become familiar with the self-assessment process, more skilled in your self-assessment skills, and develop a better understanding of your strengths and areas in which development is needed.
- Make time to consult with colleagues to receive feedback on your practice and Professional Improvement Plan.
- Identify major changes in your practice. For example, there may have been changes to your practice environment or to standards and legislation.
- Review the reference materials in the footnote in the form. This information will help you understand regulatory and professional expectations including laws, regulations, and standards governing practice, relevant legislation, new College documents, and other information.

RATING YOURSELF

When you complete the form, rate each activity considering your primary role and any other roles you have within your practice. Compare your performance in your practice with the College's standards of practice and the professional obligations required in Ontario. Choose from these options when rating your competencies:

- ✓ **Consistently Perform:** You are competent and consistently perform at the standard required for your practice, setting, and role. There may be some statements for which you are not ready to check this category.
- ✓ **Room for improvement:** You need or want to enhance your practice in this area. Check both "Consistently Perform" and "Room for improvement" if you already perform at the required standard but want to develop additional knowledge and/or skills.
- ✓ **N/A (Not Applicable):** This describes an aspect of a particular competency that does not apply to your practice at this time.

If you identify an area for growth, note it on the Competency Self-Assessment form as you go along. This will make it easier to summarize your areas for growth and to create your Professional Improvement Plan later.

NOTE: Beginning in 2021, this component of the Professional Portfolio must be completed in the Registrant Portal

Professional Improvement Plan

The Professional Improvement Plan is where you record your unaccredited, self-directed continuing education (CE) hours. You begin by listing and recording the activities you worked on throughout the year. Finally, you summarize any new knowledge and skills you gained and the effect it has on your practice.

The annual non-accredited, self-directed CE requirement is 4 hours.

THREE STEPS TO DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Plan your learning for the year for your professional improvement.
2. Record your activity and resource material used as unaccredited, self-directed CE activity hours.
3. Reflect on the knowledge and/or skills you acquired and the effect it has on your practice.

1. Plan your learning for the year: After completing the Competency Self-Assessment form, think and plan about the activities you will do that will have a positive effect on your practice.

Tip: Write down activities and resource materials that are concrete enough to guide behavior, result in change and growth, and make a positive impact on your opticianry practice.

2. Track and describe your completed unaccredited, self-directed CE activity hours: Throughout the year, list the CE activities you completed in the Professional Improvement Plan. On the Professional Improvement Plan, make sure you record:

- The name of the activities or a description of them;
- The presenter information or the resources used (e.g., Website address, journal title, conference title, etc.);
- The dates you completed the activities;
- How many hours it took you to complete the activities

3. Reflect on the knowledge and/or skills you acquired: Before the end of the year, summarise any new knowledge and skills you have gained and the positive effect it has made on your practice.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF NON- ACCREDITED, SELF-DIRECTED CE ACTIVITIES?

Unaccredited CE activities can be described as any activity that supports learning, reinforces current practice, and/or provides new knowledge and/or skill. Some examples of unaccredited CE activities may include but are not limited to:

- **Critical incident analysis:** A critical incident is sometimes called an ‘Aha!’ experience. Document the thought-provoking incident indicating when errors occurred or were narrowly averted. When something went well, state how you could repeat that success next time.
- **Organized events:** Conferences, sponsored education, events, and lectures that are not accredited by the College.
- **Information from the College:** Exploring the College website, reading the College newsletter,

attending College teleconferences, or watching College webinars.

- **Learning from patients:** Document and reflect on what you have learned from patients who ask a question you don't know how to answer or present with a condition you are unfamiliar with. How did you approach these situations? What did you learn?
- **Interactions with students:** Supervising and mentoring students, interns, and peers.
- **Professional journals:** Reading journal articles, abstracts, white papers, or articles published on credible websites.
- **Professional experience and activities:** Professional work experience, missionary work, or professional opticianry volunteer work.
- **Professional contacts:** Describe situations in which you learned from your peers. From whom did you learn, what did you learn, and how has this learning experience affected your practice?
- **Project work:** Contributing to the development of patient education or marketing materials
- **Distance learning activities:** Learning more about opticianry or professional development through print, internet, video, and/or television.
- **Excess accredited hours:** any excess accredited hours can be used toward your unaccredited activity log.

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR NON-ACCREDITED, SELF-DIRECTED CE ACTIVITY HOURS

Non-accredited, self-directed CE activity hours can be accumulated in the following ways:

- Hour-for-hour for non-accredited, self-directed learning activities, for example:
 - Live and/or multi-media presentations (seminars/lectures/workshops)
 - Distance learning activities (print/internet/video/television)
 - Scholastic (educational institution- based courses)
 - Self-study or organized study groups
 - Emergency medical course (such as CPR and/or first aid)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour for 1000 dispensing hours in each year (max. 1 hour per year)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour for 500 supervising hours of student opticians in each year (max. 2 hours per year)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour for 500 teaching hours in a school setting in each year (max. 2 hours per year)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour total for participating as a board member, an appointed committee member, or a professional association board member (max. 1 hour per year)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour for one volunteer event (includes uncompensated opticianry volunteer missionary work abroad provided supporting documentation such as a letter of deployment/time abroad from the organization or a certificate of verification) (max. 2 hours/events per year)
- 1 unaccredited, self-directed hour for examiners or peer assessors in each year (max. 2 hours per year)

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- Create a clear, focused, self-directed plan. Look at your professional needs and current circumstances to create your plan. This is an opportunity to fill gaps in your knowledge, skill, and practice. Also, refer to the Competency Self-Assessment form and the College's standards of practice.
- Choose appropriate CE activities. The activities should help improve your knowledge and the quality of care in your practice, practice site, or profession.

- Enhance your practice. Choose activities that will improve:
 - Quality in a specific area,
 - Patient outcomes; and/or
 - Professional Development in the practice,
 - Your performance in a specific area of practice.
- Enhance your practice within your practice site. Choose activities that will:
 - Transfer new knowledge to other opticians; and/or
 - Update your knowledge with new techniques in your field,
 - Allow you to take a leadership role in encouraging best practice.
- Enhance your practice within the profession. Choose activities that will:
 - Assist in the development of standards of practice or other professional standards; and/or
 - Mentor, teach, or educate those who are seeking more experience in the field of opticianry.
- Combine any related opportunities:
 - Identify two or three opportunities that are priorities for you. Learning is a lifelong process, so avoid taking on too much. Focus on the most critical learning opportunities that will benefit your practice.

Needs are different from wants. You may want to learn about Teflon Clear Coat Lenses, but you may need to learn about infection control. Prioritize your learning needs so you don't overextend yourself.

Self-regulated professionals engage in professional development and continuing education to maintain competence and keep abreast of current knowledge, skill, research, and industry and/or regulatory standards. The public expects opticians to be competent and provide up-to-date knowledge and service.

NOTE: Beginning in 2021, this component of the Professional Portfolio must be completed in the Registrant Portal

Beginning in 2020, the accredited continuing education (CE) activities you completed to fulfil your accredited CE requirements **must** be recorded in the Registrant Portal under “Accredited Activities”.

ONLINE REGISTRANT PORTAL

The [COO Registrant Portal](#) has been approved and running since 2020. This means that Opticians are now required to record their CE hours online through the Quality Assurance section of the Registrant Portal.

For assistance uploading CE to the Registrant Portal, please visit the [Registrant Portal Information page](#).

The annual accredited CE requirements* include:

- 4 accredited Contact Lens (CL) Hours
- 4 accredited Eyeglass (EG) Hours
- 4 accredited Professional Growth (PG) Hours**

***Opticians who have a refracting designation from the College are required to submit 2 additional CE hours specific to refraction.*

HOW TO CALCULATE ACCREDITED CE ACTIVITY HOURS

Accredited CE activities can be accumulated in the following ways:

- Hour-for-hour for activities that have been approved as accredited by the QA Committee as published on the College’s website.
- Hour-for-hour for presenting accredited activities. Registrants may claim accredited hours equal to the accredited hours offered for the presentation. Registrants can only claim accredited hours for the first presentation conducted.

For a list of CE activities that have been accredited by the COO, please visit the [Resources for Opticians page](#).

WHAT IF I COMPLETE A HYBRID CE ACTIVITY (e.g., EG/CL)?

If you’ve completed a hybrid CE activity (e.g., EG/CL or EG/CL/RF), you must identify which CE category you would like for the CE to apply. For example, if you completed an activity accredited as EG/CL, you must choose whether this activity will apply to your portfolio as a contact lens or eyeglass activity.

If you have completed a hybrid CE activity that is worth more than 1 hour, you can choose to split this activity and include it in two different CE categories if this will help you fulfil your requirements. For example, if you completed a course that was accredited as 2 EG/CL, you can use 1 hour as an eyeglass CE and 1 hour as a contact lens CE. Please contact qa@collegeofopticians.ca for assistance with this.

Competent – is the quality of being adequate by possessing the required skill, knowledge, qualification, and/or capacity.

Continuing competence – is the ongoing ability to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgements required to practice safely and ethically in the optician's role and to fulfil employment responsibilities. Competency can be measured against acceptable standards, such as the Professional Standards of Practice for Opticians in the Province of Ontario. (Adapted from the CAN, 2000 and the CPA, 2003).

Continuing professional development – is the process of engaging in activities that support lifelong learning and result in continuous growth in knowledge, skills, and judgement required for opticianry practice. Professional development involves a mixture of formal and informal learning activities including attending courses, reading journals, and participating in professional committees.

Continuous quality improvement – is defined by the Ontario Health Quality Council as the systematic use of tools from quality improvement science that have been developed over the past 60 years. It includes understanding how systems operate, measuring and monitoring quality over time, and implementing change. (The council is a resource for members of the public who want to play an active role in their care and for people who work in the system who want to improve quality).

Enhancement – is striving for constant improvement.

Incompetent – means lacking in qualifications or ability, being incapable, performing below the standard. If incompetent, you are unable or legally unqualified to perform specific acts.

Outcome – is a characteristic that is expected to change as a result of a provision of a strategy, intervention, or program.

Practice – refers to all patient-related activities as defined within the legislated scope of practice of an optician. This includes all practice care, financial records and reports, behaviour while using the title of optician, and activities undertaken to enable opticians to meet professional standards and incorporate professional expectations into institutional policies.

Quality Assurance Program – means a program to ensure the quality of the practice of the profession and to promote continuing evaluation, competence, and improvement among the registrants. (June 4, 2009, RHPA, Ontario).

Reflection – is careful thought, especially the process of reconsidering previous actions, events, or decisions.

Scope of practice – in opticianry is the provision, fitting, and adjustment of subnormal vision devices, contact lenses, or eyeglasses, Opticianry Act, 1991, c. 34, s. 3.

Self-assessment – is ongoing appraisal of one's professional practice to enhance personal competence and improve future practice.

Self-directed learning activity – is self-initiated study that enhances the optician's learning. E.g., Reading journal articles and visiting websites relating to opticianry, business, marketing, or financial planning.