Fair Registration Practices Report

Opticians (2012)

The answers that you submitted to OFC can be seen below.

This Fair Registration Practices Report was produced as required by:

- the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act (FARPA) s. 20 and 23(1), for regulated professions named in Schedule 1 of FARPA
- the Health Professions Procedural Code set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) s. 22.7 (1) and 22.9(1), for health colleges.

Provision of Information About Registration Practices (1 / 13)

Describe how you make information about registration practices available to individuals applying or intending to apply for registration. Specify the tools used to provide information, and the manner in which you make that information available, current, accurate and user friendly in each of these subcategories:

a) steps to initiate the registration process

Information about the College of Opticians of Ontario's (College) registration process for non-accredited education applicants (i.e. applicants educated in Canada and internationally educated applicants who have not graduated from an accredited and recognized program or are not registered and in good standing with another Canadian opticianry regulator), nationally registered applicants (i.e. applicants applying under Ontario's Labour Mobility Legislation from a Canadian jurisdiction where opticianry is a regulated profession who are currently licensed or registered under a class or category of registration that is similar to the class or category of registration they are applying for in Ontario) and accredited education applicants (i.e. applicants for registration who have graduated from or are currently enrolled in an accredited opticianry program recognized by the College) is readily available on the College website at www.coptont.org under the applicant tab. Regulations, by-laws and policies that govern the registration process, as well as registration flow-charts are posted on the website, including application forms and guides. The website is checked regularly for content accuracy. Every effort is made to explain the processes in plain language so that the information is user friendly.

The College also sends information / application packages out to applicants who e-mail / fax or mail their inquires. For non-accredited applicants there is a staff member assigned to deal with initial inquires who provides information promptly. Most inquiries are submitted by e-mail or phone. The College also participates in information sessions for new students at the two Ontario-based teaching institutions that offer NACOR (National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators) accredited and Ministry approved opticianry programs. All potential applicants may receive an information / application package at the session and ask questions of the College representatives. We also encourage applicants to make an appointment if they wish to discuss the application process in person.

The College also conducts information sessions to students in the final stages of their program before the graduate from the NACOR accredited and Ministry approved opticianry programs. The sessions are intended to clarify the exam application process, as well as the application process for applying for a certificate of registration as an optician once the students successfully pass registration examinations.

b) requirements for registration

The requirements for registration for all classes (i.e. registered opticians, student opticians and intern opticians) and sources of applicants (i.e. non-accredited, accredited and nationally registered) are posted on the website, including the regulations, by-laws, registration policies and flow-charts that outline the requirements.

Once a registration inquiry has been received, an information package is either mailed or emailed to the potential applicant. The package usually contains a cover letter, information sheet(s) and application forms outlining the requirements for registration in more detail. Staff are always available to answer questions or provide any further information by e-mail, phone or mail. We also encourage applicants to make an appointment if they wish to discuss the application process in person.

The information sessions for new students at the two Ontario-based teaching institutions that provide NACOR accredited and Ministry approved Opticianry programs include presentations and Q&A with the College representatives. General information about the registration practices and an overview is provided this way.

The registration application packages are regularly reviewed for accuracy and ease of use. Should any policy or registration practice change, the information is updated. We endeavour to use plain language wherever possible to explain the registration requirements.

c) explanation of how the requirements for registration are to be met, such as the number of years of schooling required for a degree to be deemed equivalent to an Ontario undergraduate degree, length and type of work experience, credit hours or program content

This information is posted on the website for all classes of registration from all sources.The application package also contains this information. The requirements are clearly outlined, such as the requirement to have both the eyeglasses dispensing and the contact lens dispensing education / training in order to obtain registration as an optician. Registration staff also provide information and explanation on how the requirements for registration are to be met via telephone, e-mail or mail, or in-person upon request.

As an example, for non-accredited education applicants, a defined number of dispensing hours and fittings (work experience) is required. We accept the applicant's solemn declaration regarding practical experience as proof of the stated number of hours and fittings. This requirement and the way to satisfy it is outlined in the application package. The explanation about the process for credential assessment done by WES, what kind of an assessment the applicant will go through, the required level of language proficiency, as well as the fees that apply for non-accredited - internationally educated applicants are posted on the website and outlined in the application package.

For new students the College prepares application packages that include an information sheet, an application, as well as copies of the Opticianry Act, the College Regulations and By-laws (a number of requirements and fees are outlined here). These packages are distributed to all potential student optician applicants at the information session.

d) any education or practical experience required for registration that must be completed in Ontario or practice that must be supervised by a member of the profession who is registered in Ontario

The College does not have any specific requirements for all applicants to complete their education / practical experience in Ontario. This requirement is only in place for accredited education applicants who follow the "local" path to registration as opticians. Student opticians satisfy this requirement as part of their curriculum at the approved Ontario opticianry program. The College requires this type of applicant to submit verification of completed 1,000 hours of supervised dispensing experience.

This requirement is communicated to them at information sessions (when they register as new students), on the website, and in the cover letter sent to them once their status is upgraded to intern opticians upon successful graduation from the program. This requirement does not apply to nationally registered applicants who are already fully licensed in another province as an optican via Ontario's labour mobility legislation.

Non-accredited - internationally educated applicants must provide a solemn declaration verifying the approximate number of eyeglasses and contact lens fittings and the approximate number of hours of verified dispensing experience they have completed while practising in their home country.

e) requirements that may be satisfied through acceptable alternatives

This issue may be relevant for non-accredited - internationally educated applicants who, for various reasons, are unable to provide their documents. The College has developed a flow-chart, linked on the web page that outlines the requirements for registration for non-accredited education applicants that explains which requirements may be satisfied through alternative ways and what these ways exactly are (a statutory declaration). Basically, all requirements that are to be satisfied by presenting relevant documentation may be satisfied by way of a statutory declaration - if the applicant is unable to obtain the documentation (due to extraordinary circumstances). The applicant may also provide a detailed letter of explanation of his / her individual circumstances, letters from supervisors, employers, etc. The applicant will go through a prior learning assessment and recognition process to demonstrate his / her level of knowledge and skills in opticianry. Otherwise, the information on acceptable alternatives is posted on or website and available upon request via in-person, phone, fax, e-mail or regular mail.

As for accredited education applicants this issue has never arisen. The College would work with the applicant (obtaining a confirmation letter, etc. from the teaching institution) should this occur.

A good example of the College's flexibility in this area is our experience with applicants from a non accredited out-of-province school. The applicants were not able to provide a detailed course outline, which is normally necessary for the document assessment, therefore, the Registration Committee decided to accept an individual "Student Record" instead. The "Student Record" document is available and provides some information to assist the Committee.

f) the steps in the assessment process

The assessment process is explained in detail in the application package. The condensed version of the process is also outlined on the website. The registration staff are available to answer any questions by phone, email or in person.

g) the documentation of qualifications that must accompany each application; indicate which documents, if any, are required only from internationally trained applicants

Information on what documentation of qualifications is needed is available on the website and included in the application package. This information is also provided by the registration staff over the phone, via e-mail / mail or in person. Non-accredited education applicants (i.e. Canadian/ internationally educated) are requested to submit any diploma(s), certificate(s), the course outlines, official transcripts, or other school information. Non-accredited - internationally educated applicants are specifically required to submit WES course-by-course evaluation and language proficiency test results (if education not completed in English / French). Again, if

obtaining these documents for internationally educated applicants would cause undue hardship to the applicant, there are alternative ways of proving the applicant's credentials (statutory declaration).

In the past, for recent applicants from a non-accredited school, the Registration Committee has accepted a copy of the applicant's Student Record instead of an official course outline, which the applicants had problems obtaining. This now applies to all future applicants from that school and is communicated to applicants in the cover letter of their application package. The Registration Committee is still able to get sufficient information from this document to to complete the document assessment process.

h) acceptable alternatives to the documentation if applicants cannot obtain the required documentation for reasons beyond their control

There is a link to a flow-chart and instructions on the website outlining the process and requirements for non-accredited education applicants. The flow-chart provides details on acceptable alternatives to the documentation if the applicant cannot obtain the required documentation for reasons beyond his / her control. We accept a statutory declaration from the applicant in lieu of missing documents that are required by legislation. The applicant could also submit a detailed letter explaining his / her circumstances, letters from employers, etc in addition to the statutory declaration. The initial application package also outlines the process.

The registration staff also provide the information on acceptable alternatives upon request, by phone, e-mail, mail or in person.

For recent applicants from a non-accredited school, the Registration Committee, after realizing that applicants had problems obtaining an official course outline from the school, decided to accept a copy of the applicant's Student Record instead. This is now communicated to all future applicants who graduated from the same school, via the cover letter in the application package.

i) how applicants can contact your organization

The website lists contact information for the College, including all staff - their name, title (for example, Coordinator of Registration and the Manager, Professional Programs), e-mail address and phone extension. This information is regularly reviewed and updated. Applicants are welcome to contact the College by e-mail, mail, fax, telephone, and are encouraged to make appointments if they wish to attend in person. Applicants can meet with the Coordinator of Registration or Manager of Professional Programs.

The cover letter of the application package also includes the name, e-mail address and extension of the staff person the applicant can contact for any questions or information.

j) how, why and how often your organization initiates communication with applicants about their applications

The College always requests the contact information for an applicant, including their address, e-mail address and phone number. If the application is not complete, the registration staff will contact the applicant to request the missing information.

Once all required documents are received non-accredited education applicants (Canadian or internationally educated) are contacted to notify them that their file will be presented to the Registration Committee. The assessment fees , if required, are due at this point as well. Shortly after the meeting takes place, the applicant ill be contacted via e-mail or phone to provide an update on the decision of the

Registration Committee, usually within five business days. A formal letter will follow shortly thereafter.

The College also has a Registration Timeline Policy posted in the Applicant portion of the website which provides a guide for applicants on how long their applications may take to be reviewed and processed.This policy is also included in the initial application packages.

k) the process for dealing with documents provided in languages other than English or French

The College requires documents be translated into English / French. This information is provided in the initial application package, on the website and by phone, e-mail, mail or in-person. The College, however, endeavors to be flexible and reasonable, and we might accept a photocopy of a translated document if the circumstances warrant it.

l) the role of third-party organizations, such as qualification assessment agencies, organizations that conduct examinations or institutions that provide bridging programs, that applicants may come into contact with during the registration process

This information is posted on the website and contact information is provided for all third-party organizations that applicants may come in contact with. The application packages also contain the same information and it is provided by staff via phone / e-mail / mail or in person.

For non - accredited - internationally educated applicants, the College requires a course-by-course evaluation by WES and the applicants are advised accordingly on the College website and in the application package. The applicants contact WES directly and bear the costs of the evaluation.

The applicants who were not educated in English / French must also provide evidence of the level of language proficiency. There are a number of language proficiency tests we accept (according to the policy that is made available to the applicants early on in the process through the website, application package and the information provided by staff).

All applicants with the exception of nationally registered applicants who come to us fully licensed as opticians in another province under Ontario's Labour Mobility Legislation, must pass the National Eyeglass and the National Contact Lens Examination. The exams are administered by NACOR (National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators). The exams administration is facilitated by the College. This information, as well as the contact information for NACOR, is posted on the website, included in the application packages and provided by staff.

Bridging programs are individually tailored on as-needed basis by teaching institutions based upon the direction of the Registration Committee of the College. The contents / length of the program depends on the applicant's individual upgrading needs as determined by the Registration Committee after an assessment. Applicants are advised of the possibility of having to complete upgrading/ additional training as part of the process and this information is posted on the website, included in written communication, via e-mail / phone or in person.

m) any timelines, deadlines or time limits that applicants will be subject to during the registration process

The College has a comprehensive Registration Timelines Policy which is posted on the website and the policy is enclosed in the application package.

For non-accredited education applicants once the file is complete, it is presented to the Registration Committee. However, applicants do not have to wait until the next available Committee in-person meeting. Our recent practices have been to deal with these matters via electronic meetings / e-mail where appropriate. The applicants are advised of this process very early on via phone / e-mail / in-person.

Once the Committee's decision has been made, the applicant is given an update (via phone / e-mail), usually within five business days. A formal letter will follow shortly thereafter. The applicants are notified about these timelines during a phone call / e-mail prior to their file being reviewed by the Committee.

If a non-accredited education applicant's file has been inactive for one year (no contact has been established, no new documents submitted, etc.) the file will be closed, but could be re-activated at a later date. This information is included in the cover letter of the application package and is also communicated over the phone / e-mail / in-person. Note that registration staff may from time to time follow-up with an applicant who they have not heard from in several months.

For accredited education/ nationally registered applicants the application processing times are indicated in written communication that accompanies all application / registration forms and registration application guides as per the registration timelines policy.

n) the amount of time that the registration process usually takes

The College has a comprehensive Registration Timelines Policy which is posted on the website and the policy is enclosed in the application package.

Non-accredited education applicants are usually given an estimated amount of time the registration process takes on the website/ over the phone / e-mail / in-person.

In reality, the amount of time the registration process usually takes depends, to a great extent, on the time the applicant needs to gather and submit his / her documents. Once all the documents (or a detailed letter of explanation plus statutory declaration, etc) have been submitted, the file is presented to the Registration Committee. As stated above, the Registration Committee will also conduct electronic meetings to deal with applications in between regularly scheduled meetings. The Committee may request more information or direct the applicant to undergo a prior learning assessment and recognition process. This process consists of an on-line competency gap analysis, a practical assessment of the applicant's contact lens insertion and removal skills and an in-person interview.

The recommendations of the interview panel and all other results are forwarded to the Registration Committee usually within two to three weeks. If the applicant is successful, he / she can usually get registered as an intern optician within four to six weeks following the Registration Committee decision. If the applicant is directed to complete bridging program(s), the same time-line for advising him / her applies.

For accredited education / nationally registered applicants, once we receive their application and documents, the communicated processing times are 6-8 weeks - applicants are advised of this in their application package.

o) information about all fees associated with registration, such as fees for initial application, exams and exam rewrites, course enrolment or issuance of licence

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

All the fees are outlined in the College of Opticians' Fees By-Law. The by-Law is posted on the website and the link information is provided to all potential student applicants as well as all members. A detailed

fee schedule for all class and category of applicants and members is also posted in the 'Becoming an Optician' and 'Member' section of the website.

The fee structure is also explained in the initial package the applicant receives. At every step thereafter, the fees are again outlined in the written communication with the applicant, as well as over the phone / e-mail / in-person and on the website.

Non-accredited education applicants are informed of all all potential fees associated with assessment and registration on the web-page in an easy-to-read table format.

p) accommodation of applicants with special needs, such as visual impairment

The College has an Accommodation of Special Needs Policy which is posted on the website in the Resource/Policies section of the website.

The College does not receive this type of request very often and deals with them upon request on individual basis. Every reasonable effort is made to accommodate such an applicant (meeting in person, assistance with completing of forms, etc).

If a special accommodation is requested with respect to registration exams, more time allowed per exam section, or frequent breaks in between the exam sections may be approved. All exam candidates (intern opticians challenging the National Exams) receive a copy of the NACOR Candidate's Examination Handbook along with their exam application. The Handbook is available on the NACOR website as well.

The Handbook clearly outlines the process for applying for special consideration during exams:

"If you require any special considerations during your examination due to disability, temporary illness, or extenuating circumstances, a written letter to NACOR outlining your specific request along with the reasons for the request must be included with your application form. All pertinent information such as medical documents must be included with your request. Requests will be reviewed and acted upon by the National Examinations Committee. Any decision reached by the National Examinations Committee is final." National Examinations Committee (NEC) is a Committee of NACOR.

Even though the decision whether to accommodate such an applicant is made by the NEC of NACOR, the College is consulted and involved in the process.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

1. College Council approved a Registration Timeline Policy for all types of application. The College endeavours to meet or exceed the stated timelines.

2. College Council approved an Accommodation of Special Needs Policy for General Services and the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Services it provides to the public, members and applicants.

Both policies are posted on the website in the Resources/Policies section.

Amount of Fees (2 / 13)

Are any of the fees different for internationally trained applicants? If yes, please explain.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

All fee amounts are communicated on the website to non-accredited - internationally educated applicants . The fees are also indicated in the application package, and are communicated via phone, e-mail, in person appointments and walk-ins.

There is a non-refundable application fee of $150.00 (plus HST) for the review of the applicants credentials/ documents/ file by the Registration Committee. However, this fee is only required once the applicant's file is ready for the Committee's review. If the file, for whatever reason, never gets to this point (abandoned, etc.) no fee is charged. This fee does not apply to accredited/ nationally registered applicants , since the Registration Committee would not have to evaluate their credentials.

There is also a fee of $600 (plus HST) for applicants required to undergo a eyeglass or contact lens assessment test. This fee includes the cost for taking the on-line gap analysis, practical contact lens or eyeglass skill assessment and the interview with the Panel. These fees ($600.00 + $150.00) also apply for the assessment of applicants who graduated from non-accredited programs in Canada.

Non-accredited - internationally educated applicants also bear the costs of the WES evaluation of their credentials (course-by-course) and / or any language proficiency testing they need to complete if they were not educated in English of French.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

N/A

Provision of Timely Decisions, Responses and Reasons (3 / 13)

a) What are your timelines for making registration decisions?

Registration decisions are made on all applications for registration whether for nationally registered or non-accredited education applicants within 4 to 8 weeks once the complete applications has been received from the applicant. If all the documentation is in order, in many cases the processing time is much shorter 3-4

weeks. The Registration Committee now will assess applications via electronic meeting rather than waiting for a scheduled in-person meeting of all committee members.

Longer timelines for making registration decisions are either as a result of incomplete application information from the applicant or if applications for registration are received in "bulk" e.g. after an examination session when the College may receive 90-100 applications or when applications are received around the College's annual registration renewal period December-February.

b) What are your timelines for responding to applicants in writing?

For a general inquiry via email, within one to two business days. Requests for application packages are sent out within a week. The only exception would be a very complex case that may require legal advice or consulting an external person. E-mail is used more and more as means of communication with applicants and they seem to prefer it. Mail service can be lengthy especially if the applicant is still in his / her home country.

c) What are your timelines for providing written reasons to applicants about all registration decisions, internal reviews and appeal decisions?

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

For non accredited education applicants, after the Committee has made a decision, the applicant is advised by phone or e-mail within a few days. The formal written notification of the decision usually follows within 5 -10 days. This notice includes the information on how to appeal the decision and to whom. If the applicant wishes to appeal, he/she is invited to submit additional documents or provide additional information, and the Registration Appeal Panel will consider the matter.

Accredited education / nationally registered applicants are advised of the approval of their registration application and their registration number by phone 1-5 days after the Registrar / Deputy Registrar has signed off on their application (which means that they have been registered with the College). An official confirmation of registration package follows shortly thereafter in the mail, but members can start working as of the date of registration.

d) Explain how your organization ensures that it adheres to these timelines.

After every Registration Committee meeting (in person or electronic / e-mail), there is a "to do" list for the registration staff. Normally, letting applicants know about registration decisions takes priority. The applicants are regularly advised prior to the meeting that they could inquire the following day after the meeting to learn about the decision. The official letter follows, usually within a week.

Also, if there is a request to expedite a registration application once approval has been given either by the Registration Committee or the Registrar, registration staff will endeavour to complete the process with a day or two.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that

occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Access to Records (4 / 13)

a) Describe how you give applicants access to their own records related to their applications for registration.

Applicants have full access to their records upon a written request. The applicant's file would be available for review and photocopy provided an appointment is made with the registration staff upon a written request.

b) Explain why access to applicants' own records would be limited or refused.

The file is reviewed to determine if there are any documents or information that might jeopardize the safety or privacy of any other person. If so, the Registrar (or designate) may choose to exclude this information in the applicant's file.

c) State how and when you give applicants estimates of the fees for making records available.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

There are no fees charged for access to records.

d) List the fees for making records available.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

There are no fees charged for access to records.

e) Describe the circumstances under which payment of the fees for making records available would be waived or would have been waived.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

There are no fees charged for access to records.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Resources for Applicants (5 / 13)

a) List and describe any resources that are available to applicants, such as application guides, exam blueprints or programs for orientation to the profession.

Application packages (for all classes of registration) contains a link to the online registration application guide which outlines the registration application process and required documents (the registration guides are available for download on the website). Applicants / members are also provided with the link to the website to download the Opticiany Act, Regulations, By-Laws and Standards of Practice and Registration Policies. All student opticians who have graduated from their program automatically receive information about the National Exams, including the NACOR Candidate's Examination Handbook at no cost to the student.

The College website offers a great deal of information for all classes of registration ('Becoming an Optician' tab). Downloadable flow charts of the different registration "paths", description of processes and requirements, contact information and areas of responsibility for all staff members, important documents (for example, the Entry-to-Practice Competencies, Registration Regulation, By-Laws, Registration Policies, etc) are all posted on the website.

b) Describe how your organization provides information to applicants about these resources.

The College website is user friendly and easy to navigate and the information is provided in a clear manner under the tab entitled "Applicant".

The contact information for all staff members (including name, position, e-mail address and extension) is posted on the website, so that potential applicants can easily contact the College to request any information.

Applicants are also informed of available resources via e-mail, phone or in person upon request.

The College offers examination, registration and professional responsibility sessions to students in the Ontario NACOR accredited and Ministry approved opticianry programs.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Internal Review or Appeal Processes (6 / 13)

In this section, describe your internal review or appeal process. Some regulatory bodies use these two terms (*internal review* and *appeal*) for two different processes, some use only one of these terms, and some use them interchangeably. Please use the term that applies to your profession. If you use both terms (for two different processes), please address both.

a) List your timelines for completing internal reviews or appeals of registration decisions.

A three member Registration Appeal Panel (RAP) is constituted at the beginning of each year at the same time the Registration Committee composition is set. The RAP consists of two Optician members and one Public member and these are different people from the people on the Registration Committee. The applicant has 15 days from the receipt of the original decision from the Registration Committee to file the internal appeal.

The RAP meets on an as needed basis, i.e. when an appeal of a decision from the Registration Committee has been filed. The applicant has 15 days from the receipt of the original decision from the Registration Committee to file the internal appeal. Once the appeal has been filed, the RAP will meet within 2 to 3 weeks to conduct the appeal. A decision is rendered at the meeting and the written decisions and reasons are finalized and issued to the applicant within 2-3 weeks of the meeting.

The decisions of the RAP are appealable to HPARB within 30 days of the receipt of the decision.

i. State the number of internal reviews or appeals of registration decisions that exceeded your timelines.

There was one internal review / appeal of the decisions of the Registration Committee in 2012. The RAP upheld the original decision of the registration committee.

ii. Among internal reviews or appeals that exceeded your timelines, state the number that were from internationally trained applicants.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

b) Specify the opportunities you provide for applicants to make submissions regarding internal reviews or appeals.

The internal appeal is paper-based. The applicant can provide additional materials / documents at any time, but is formally invited to submit any additional materials if they choose to file an internal appeal with the RAP within 15 days from the day they receive the decision and reasons from the Registration Committee. The cover letter details the process and timelines for the internal appeal.

c) Explain how you inform applicants about the form in which they must make their submissions (i.e., orally, in writing or by electronic means) for internal reviews or appeals.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The submissions from applicants are requested to be in writing, in an e-mail / fax / letter format. The applicants are informed in the cover letter that accompanies the initial decision and reasons of the Registration Committee. The review is paper-based, so there is no opportunity for the applicant to present orally.

d) State how you ensure that no one who acted as a decision-maker in a registration decision acts as a decision-maker in an internal review or appeal of the same registration decision.

The three-member Registration Appeal Panel is completely separate from the Registration Committee - it consists of three different people who are not members of the Registration Committee at the same time. The RAP consists of two Optician members and one Public member and will only meet if there is an internal appeal filed. Therefore, it is clear that the members of the RAP cannot be involved in any prior decision making.

The members of the RAP receive a detailed orientation at the beginning of the year which includes all registration requirements and processes, as well as their specific role in the process.

e) Describe your internal review or appeal process.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

As described above, the applicant is advised of his/ her right to appeal from the decision of the Registration Committee to the RAP in the cover letter that accompanies the decision and reasons of the Registration Committee. The deadline is 15 days from the receipt of the decision and reasons. The applicant is invited to make any additional submissions and submit any additional documents he/she may have. The RAP meeting would be scheduled soon thereafter. The review is paper-based and the RAP issues a written decision and reasons to the applicant. The applicant may appeal from the RAP decision to HPARB within 30 days of the receipt of the RAP decision.

f) State the composition of the committee that makes decisions about registration, which may be called a Registration Committee or Appeals Committee: how many members does the committee have; how many committee members are members of the profession in Ontario; and how many committee members are internationally trained members of the profession in Ontario.

The Registration Committee is a statutory committee and must comprise of at least 2 elected

professional optician members (Council members), 1 public appointed member, and up to 3 appointed optician members who are not members of Council. In 2012 the Committee had seven members.

The Registration Appeals Panel shall be comprised of a minimum of 3 members with at least one being a member of Council, at least one being a public member and up to 3 members who are appointed optician members who are not members of Council. In 2012 the RAP had 3 members.

The 2012 Registration Committee did not have any Committee members that were internationally trained professionals.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Information on Appeal Rights (7 / 13)

This section refers to reviews or appeals that are available after an internal review or appeal. Describe how you inform applicants of any rights they have to request a further review of or appeal from a decision.

After the internal appeal route has been exhausted by the applicant, he/she has the right to appeal the RAP decision to HPARB. The cover letter informing the applicant of the decision of the RAP (the decision and reasons are attached) includes a paragraph informing the applicant of his / her right to request a review of (file an appeal of) the RAP's decision to HPARB.

The information provided in the cover letter includes the name of the appeal body (HPARB), the address and phone / fax number, as well as the section number of the RHPA that provides for appeal rights and the deadline by which a possible appeal must be filed with the HPARB - 30 days from the receipt of the decision.

The applicants are also informed that registration decisions are appealable on the website - on the 'Non-Accredited Education Applicant' webpage.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Assessment of Qualifications (8 / 13)

This category covers your processes for assessing all qualifications, such as academic credentials, competencies, language ability or practical experience.

a) List the criteria that must be met in order for an applicant's qualifications to satisfy the entry-to-practice requirements for your profession.

Accredited Education Applicants - must have graduated from an opticianry program accredited by NACOR (approved by the MTCU or a program deemed equivalent by the Registration Committee), must have successfully completed the National Eyeglasses and the National Contact Lenses exam and have completed at least 1,000 hours of verified dispensing experience. The teaching institution provides a lists of students that have met all the requirements for graduation to the College of Opticians (College) directly. Upon receipt of this list the College and or upon application, students become intern opticians which makes them eligible to sit the registration exams. Intern opticians apply directly to NACOR to sit the registration exams, however, the College determines the eligibility of potential exam candidates. Upon successful completion of the exams, intern opticians can apply to the College for a certificate of registration as a registered optician by completing the registration application form, submitting two photos, paying the application and registration fee and providing proof of having completed at least 1000 hours of verified dispensing experience under the supervision of an optician, optometrist or a physician. Applicants must also provide a statutory declaration that they possess liability insurance coverage in the minimum specified amount and meet the general registration requirements (for example, proof of Canadian citizenship, permanent resident status or employment authorization under the immigration and refugee protection act) in order to be registered as opticians.

Nationally Registered Applicants (both licenses) - who currently hold a certificate of registration as an optician or equivalent certificate from another Canadian province and at the time he or she applies is licensed or registered and in good standing to dispense both eyeglasses and contact lenses, will be accepted for a certificate of registration as a registered optician in Ontario . In addition to meeting the general registration requirements these applicants must arrange for a letter of good standing to be sent directly to the College, provide copies of their certificates of registration, complete an application form, submit two photos, pay the fee and provide a statutory declaration that they possess liability insurance coverage in order to be registered as Opticians.

Nationally Registered Applicants (Eyeglasses only license) - who currently hold a certificate of registration as a student optician or equivalent certificate from another Canadian province and at the time he or she applies is licensed or registered and in good standing, to dispense eyeglasses but not contact lenses, will be accepted for a certificate of registration as a registered student optician in Ontario. As a requirement of registration these applicants must be enrolled in an accredited opticianry program to complete their contact lens education. Some provinces have a dual licensing system which separates the two licenses (eyeglasses dispensing and contact lens dispensing). Ontario and Quebec have a combined licensing system. Opticians licensed in Ontario hold one license that includes both eyeglasses and contact lens dispensing. Therefore, under Ontario's Labour Mobility Legislation, eyeglasses-only opticians from other provinces may apply for a certificate of registration as a student optician in Ontario and complete a contact lens program. For such registration, we require a letter of good standing from their home province be sent directly to the College, a completed application form, two photos, and payment of the application + registration fee.

Non-Accredited Education Applicants (Internationally educated) - must provide completed application forms, two photos, a course-by-course evaluation from WES, transcripts, any diploma(s) or certificate(s) they were granted, information about the teaching institution and program they graduated from, information on any licensing exam(s) they passed, whether they are licensed in their home country (if so a confirmation letter from the regulatory body), statement of professional experience and proof of language proficiency as per the

College's Language Proficiency Policy. Once approved by the Registration Committee (may include a prior learning assessment and recognition process), such applicants become eligible to apply either for a certificate of registration as an intern optician (then must successfully pass the National EG and the National CL exam) or student optician (if directed to take any bridging programs or enroll in an accredited opticianry program). At this point, once they successfully pass both registration exams, the applicant becomes eligible to apply for a certificate of registration as a registered optician following the same process as described above, however these applicants may complete the required 1000 hours of verified dispensing experience in their home country. If the dispensing experience is not supported by a supervising optician these applicants must submit a solemn declaration.

Non-Accredited Education Applicants (Canadian educated) - Applications from non-accredited programs from individuals who wish to be registered as opticians in Ontario are assessed by the Registration Committee. The applicants must submit all documents that are requested of internationally educated applicants, except for the WES assessment and proof of language proficiency. These applicants have to go through a prior learning assessment and recognition process, which has been developed and implemented nationally to ensure consistency of assessments throughout Canada. The PLAR process consists of: assessment of documents, on-line competency gap analysis, a practical assessment of the applicant's contact lens insertion and removal skills and an in-person interview with a Panel. The Panel makes recommendations to the Registration Committee, that then makes a decision and issues a decision and reasons to the applicant. The applicant may be: directed to take bridging program(s) (in which case, he/she is eligible to apply for a student optician license), take the registration exams (in which case, he/she is eligible to apply for an intern optician license), register as an optician (very rare cases), or enroll in an accredited program (eligible for a student optician license). The applicant will also be required to obtain 1000 hours of verified dispensing experience prior to registration as an optician.

b) Describe the methodology used to determine whether a program completed outside of Canada satisfies the requirements for registration.

Non-accredited - internationally educated applicants who are required to obtain an assessment of their academic credentials and a comparison to Ontario educational standards from World Education Services (WES). A course-by-course evaluation is required. This is a starting point of an assessment done by the Registration Committee. The Committee assesses each individual applicant separately. Therefore, Opticianry programs completed outside of Canada are assessed on an individual basis. The Registration Committee ensures that there is consistency and equal treatment of applicants by reviewing previous decisions. The Registration Committee assesses whether the program the applicant has graduated from meets the Entry-to-Practice Competencies for An Optician in Ontario for each individual applicant.

If the program and credentials are deemed to have only partially met the Entry-to-Practice Competencies, the applicant is required to undergo a prior learning assessment and recognition process which provides for a snapshot of the applicant's knowledge and skill set. Upon completion of the PLAR process, depending whether gaps in knowledge and skills were demonstrated, the applicant may be directed to complete additional training at an accredited institution or sit the registration exams before applying for a certificate of registration as a registered intern optician or registered optician.

If the program and credentials are deemed to have met the Entry-to-Practice Competencies, the applicant may be directed to apply for a certificate of registration as an intern optician and challenge the National Exams directly. The process continues thereafter, as described above.

c) Explain how work experience in the profession is assessed.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Non- accredited education applicants (Internationally educated) - these applicants must give a solemn declaration confirming the approximate number of hours of dispensing experience in their home country, as well as the approximate number of fittings he / she has completed. The requirement is a minimum of 1,000 hours of verified dispensing experience. The College will only accept verified dispensing experience completed outside of Canada from non-accredited applicants who are internationally educated and were practicing as an optician in their home country. The Committee will accept a solemn declaration if the applicant is unable provide proof that the required hours were supervised by an optician.

d) Describe how your organization ensures that information used in the assessment about educational systems and credentials of applicants from outside Canada is current and accurate.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Non- accredited - internationally educated applicants must first submit their credentials to WES for evaluation on a course-by-course basis. The Registration Committee then evaluates whether the program the applicant completed meets the College of Opticians' Entry-to-practice competencies. The Committee relies on WES to confirm the authenticity of the applicant's credentials and the level of education compared to the Canadian system. WES is a very respectable organization used widely in the regulatory world and it is highly specialized in the area of credential assessments.

The applicant is asked to provide a copy of his/her documents (course curriculum, transcript, information about the program and the teaching institution) to the Committee as well, and they are accepted from the applicant or from the school directly.

e) Describe how previous assessment decisions are used to assist in maintaining consistency when assessing credentials of applicants from the same jurisdictions or institutions.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Even though the document assessment is done on an individual basis, consistency in decision making for the applicants who graduated from the same institution at the same time is very important. The College's Manager of Professional Programs acts as a support staff person for the Registration Committee. She ensures that all relevant previous assessment decisions are brought to the attention of the Committee in order to maintain consistency and equal treatment of applicants when assessing credentials of applicants from the same jurisdiction / institutions.

f) Explain how the status of an institution in its home country affects recognition of the credentials of applicants by your organization.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The Registration Committee relies on WES and the resources WES has at its disposal (an extensive database and research programs) to verify the authenticity of credentials. WES is a reputable non-profit organization that is well know for its services of evaluating international credentials.

g) Describe how your organization accommodates applicants with special needs, such as visual impairment.

The College endeavors to accommodate any reasonable requests of this kind. This could include meeting in person with the applicant, interviewing the applicant (by the Registration Department staff), the applicant bringing a support person (i.e. a family member / interpreter), assistance with completing forms, etc. As already stated the COO has an accommodation of special needs policy which is posted on the website.

Requests of this kind (special considerations) are rare in the registration area, they occur more often in the area of exams, which are handled by NACOR.

h) State the average length of time required to complete the entire registration process, from when the process is initiated to when a registration decision is issued.

It is important to note that the typical length of time of the registration process from initial application through to registration varies greatly when it comes to different classes of registration and applicants originating from different sources. Sometimes it is out of the College's control. How long the process takes depends directly on the point in time the applicant submits the required documentation or payment.

Typical processing times are as follows:

Accredited Education Applicants: for a certificate of registration as: a student optician: 4-8 weeks; as an intern optician once they graduate from their educational program:4-6 weeks; a registered optician: 4-8 weeks once they have passed the National Examinations.

Nationally Registered Applicants for a certificate of registration: as a student optician and registered optician:4-8 weeks from the date of initial application.

Non-Accredited Education Applicants for a certificate of registration (internationally educated): varies greatly, depends on the point of time the file is complete to be reviewed by the Registration Committee. Anywhere from three months to one year from the time of initial application. Once the file is complete, it typically takes 11-17 weeks. If there are requests for additional documents or clarification, it may take up to 52 weeks. If the applicant has been referred to bridging programs and registers as a student optician, the length of time is directly dependent on the time the applicant takes to complete all specified bridging programs. However, once the applicant has met all of the requirements and can apply for a certificate of registration either as a registered student, intern or optician, then processing time is 4-8 weeks.

Non-Accredited Education Applicants for a certificate of registration (Canadian educated): - similar process as for internationally educated applicants, as these applicants go through the prior learning assessment and recognition process. However, these applicants normally have no problems gathering the necessary documentation. The whole process for them to be directed either to complete bridging programs, register as intern opticians and take the registration exams or enroll in an accredited program may take 3-6 months. Here too, once the applicant has met all of the requirements and can apply for a certificate of registration either as a registered student, intern or optician, then processing time is 4-8 weeks.

Although in our communication with the applicants we indicate 4-8 weeks as average application processing time, this has been done in order to manage expectations. In reality, the application processing time takes 3-4 weeks in most cases. It is important to note that for accredited and nationally registered applicants, longer processing time can happen when the applications are received in "bulk". For example, after an exam session, it is quite possible for the College to receive 90-100 applications virtually at the same time. If this is the case, the College cannot meet the typical length of processing time of 3-4 weeks. The College wishes to have the applicants forewarned that they may have to wait up until 8 weeks if there are many applications

received at the same time.

i. State whether the average time differs for internationally trained individuals.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Please see above - (h) for the answer.

ii. If the average time differs for internationally trained individuals, state whether it is greater or less than the average for all applicants, and the reasons for the difference.

Please see above - (h) for the answer. The process for assessing and evaluating non-accredited - internationally educated applicants is quite different from the process used for accredited education and nationally registered applicants and depends greatly on whether the required documents have been submitted. However, once all the documentation has been submitted and the conditions met set by the Registration Committee, the procession time of the complete application is the same for all applicants.

i) If your organization conducts credential assessments:

i. Explain how you determine the level (e.g., baccalaureate, master's, Ph.D.) of the credential presented for assessment.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

This information is contained in the WES course-by-course evaluation report the College receives directly from WES.

ii. Describe the criteria that are applied to determine equivalency.

The Committee assesses whether the program the applicant has completed meets the Entry-to Practice Competencies for an Optician in Ontario and whether it is comparable to a similar Ontario accredited by MTCU opticianry program. If the program partially meets the competencies, the applicant may demonstrate his level of knowledge and skills through completing the prior learning assessment and recognition process which will identify if there are any gaps in his/her competency.

Please note that the entry-to-practice competencies are developed nationally and adopted by each provincial regulator. In Ontario, the MTCU approved opticianry programs use the competency profile to develop curriculum and NACOR uses the competencies to construct the national opticianry examinations.

iii. Explain how work experience is taken into account.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The prior learning assessment and recognition process has a practical component and by completing it the applicant has the opportunity to demonstrate his / her knowledge, skills and experience in opticianry. Also, the

applicant's solemn declaration regarding his / her work experience and number of hours of dispensing experience and number of fittings are always taken into account in the Committee's deliberations.

j) If your organization conducts competency assessment:

i. Describe the methodology used to evaluate competency.

The program contents (course outline), length of the program, number of teaching / practical hours, etc. are compared to the Entry-to-Practice Competencies for an Optician in Ontario to determine if the competency requirements have mostly been met. This way, the program is evaluated as to whether it is comparable to an approved Ontario program (which teaches to the Entry-to-Practice Competencies).

If the program meets the competencies only partially, the Committee normally directs the applicant to undergo a prior learning assessment and recognition process. This process is comprehensive in determining an applicant's theoretical and practical knowledge and level of competency. The PLAR process consists of: a comprehensive on-line competency gap analysis, a practical assessment of the applicant's contact lens insertion and removal skills and an in-depth in-person interview with the Panel. Based on all the results, the Panel makes recommendations to the Registration Committee and the Committee reaches a decision.

ii. Explain how the methodology used to evaluate competency is validated, and how often it is validated.

Although the Entry-to-Practice Competencies is reviewed annually in conjunction with the national examination bank, the entry-level competency profile itself is undergoing a comprehensive, full scale review and validation which commenced fall of 2012.

The prior learning assessment and review process has been developed and implemented nationally. The bank of questions for the on-line competency gap analysis is reviewed and revised regularly by expert panels from British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta, which are the provinces that receive the most applicants. All the participating provinces (all provinces except for Quebec) have receive a two-day comprehensive orientation and training session.

iii. Explain how work experience is used in the assessment of competency.

The Registration Committee evaluates the program the applicant has completed against the Entry-to-Practice Competencies when assessing the applicant's competencies. If the competencies have not been met, or have been met only partially, the applicant must undergo a prior learning assessment and recognition process to further asses each applicant's individual competencies.

For all applicants, statements of any work experience form a part of the evaluation and are taken into account when the Registration Committee reaches its decision.

k) If your organization conducts prior learning assessment:

i. Describe the methodology used to evaluate prior learning.

The College uses a national Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process (PLAR) which is the same across Canada (except for Quebec).

Applicants educated in Canada and internationally educated applicants; who have not graduated from an accredited and or deemed equivalent program, or do not currently hold a certificate of registration with a Canadian opticianry regulator outside of Ontario may be accepted for registration if they have a combination of knowledge, skills, experience and abilities which are, in the opinion of the College's Registration Committee, substantially equivalent to the ones required for new applicants under the Colleges Regulation. After they have completed a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process, these applicants may be directed to complete additional training or upgrading as determined by the Registration Committee.

PLAR is a process that allows applicants who have not completed their education through an accredited opticianry program to be assessed. These applicants will be asked to demonstrate their level of knowledge and skills of opticianry. The PLAR process potentially leads to obtaining recognition for prior learning these applicants have acquired. The applicant submits an application package for PLAR, along with all relevant documents.

PLAR consists of the following steps:

- Application is submitted to the Registration Committee.
- The Registration Committee conducts a preliminary assessment of the application (includes review of tanscripts of formal education and course curriculum, examination(s), verification of professional experience, letters of registration or licensure (good standing), WES report, proof of language proficiency, resume of work experience, letters of personal reference and professional competence etc).
- The Registration Committee directs the applicant to complete an assessment (theoretical, practical and an in-person interview).
- The Registration Committee assesses all of the information obtained and issues a decision.

ii. Explain how the methodology used to evaluate prior learning is validated, and how often it is validated.

The PLAR process was developed and implemented nationally in 2010. The on-line competency gap analysis bank of questions was developed by a team of experts and has been reviewed by expert Panels from British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario and the bank of questions for the on-line competency gap analysis is reviewed and revised regularly by expert panels from British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta, which are the provinces that receive the most applicants. All the participating provinces (all provinces except for Quebec) have receive a two-day comprehensive orientation and training session.
There is an assumption that once the Entry-to-Practice Competency review project is completed, that a review of the gab analysis bank of questions could also occur at some point in time.

iii. Explain how work experience is used in the assessment of prior learning.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

All applicants are required to state how many hours of dispensing experience they have done, as well as the approximate number of eyeglasses and contact lens fittings. This statement is considered when the Registration Committee assesses the applicant.

l) If your organization administers examinations:

i. Describe the exam format, scoring method and number of rewrites permitted.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The College of Opticians facilitates the administration of the National Eyeglasses (EG) Exam and the National Contact Lenses (CL) Exam.

The exams are administered by the National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR). Nine provincial regulatory bodies, including the College of Opticians of Ontario use the NACOR exams as a pathway to registration.

The National EG exam measures 40 areas of competence broken down into five sections with 135 enabling objectives. One of the sections is knowlegde-based and four are skill-based with clinical judgment-based subsets. Within the five sections there is the possibility of achieving 236 marks. The passing mark is 145 marks or 61%. If a candidate fails the examinations they must repeat the entire examination.

The National CL exam measures 30 areas of competence broken down into five sections with 125 enabling objectives. One of the sections is knowledge-based and four or the sections are skill-based with clinical judgment-based sub-sets. Within the five sections there is a possibility of achieving 216 marks. The passing mark is 147 marks or 68%. If a candidate fails the examinations they must repeat the entire examination.

A candidate is entitled to challenge a NACOR exam a maximum of three times. After the third unsuccessful attempt, the candidate must comply with an approved upgrading program (by the Registration Committee) before any further challenge of the exam is permitted. In order to become eligible to apply for an Optician license in Ontario, the applicant must successfully complete both the National Eyeglasses and the National Contact Lenses exam.

ii. Describe how the exam is tested for validity and reliability. If results are below desired levels, describe how you correct the deficiencies.

Critical to the reliability of examination results is the method by which the pass mark is established. The method used by the National Examination Committee (NEC) of NACOR to establish the pass mark for the examinations is the modified Angoff method. Using this method each component of the examination is isolated. The examinations are regularly reviewed by a panel which consists of representatives of each province that administers the exams. Each member of the examination review panel is asked the question, If 100 candidates of entry level competence were to answer this question, what percentage of candidates would get the correct answer? If there is a divergence in opinion of more than 30%, those delegates estimating at the high and low end of the spectrum are required to provide a rationale to defend their estimation. A second poll is taken, and a third until all delegates have rethought and realigned their assessment and are satisfied in validity of their pass marks. Assessment Strategies uses the data collected to establish the pass mark for the examination.

The NEC met a minimum of four times a year during the development phase of the examinations and continues to meet twice a year to evaluate results and make modifications to the exam bank ontentas required. Every province (including Ontario) that administers the exam has a representative on the examination review panel.

iii. State how often exam questions are updated and the process for doing so.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Please see the above answer - ii.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Third-Party Organizations (9 / 13)

a) List any third-party organizations (such as language testers, credential assessors or examiners) relied upon by your organization to make assessment decisions.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Language Testers:
TOEFL, Canadian Language Benchmarks, MELAB, IELTS, TestCan

Credential Assessors:
WES

Examiners:
NACOR (National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators), more specifically, the NEC (National Examinations Committee), a sub-committee of NACOR

b) Explain what measures your organization takes to ensure that any third-party organization that it relies upon to make an assessment:

i. provides information about assessment practices to applicants

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The College of Opticians ensures that relevant information is posted on the third-party organizations' website.

We also provide information / links on our website. More information is provided in the information / application packages about these organizations and their role in the assessment process. For example, the College provides copies of the NACOR Candidate's Examination Handbooks to eligible exam candidates and directs them to the NACOR website where they can download the Handbook.

ii. utilizes current and accurate information about qualifications from outside Canada

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

WES has done several presentations to the Registration Committee about the methods they utilize to ensure

current and accurate information is used in their process. Their system / database is updated regularly and they frequently research conditions in foreign countries that affect the education. WES is a reputable non-profit organization that is highly specialized and well know for its services of evaluating international credentials. As a research-based non-profit organization, WES stays abreast of developments in education and other educational authorities all over the world.

iii. provides timely decisions, responses and reasons to applicants

The COO is a stakeholder and member of NACOR and the Registrar and the President attend bi-annual meetings to discuss a whole host of regulatory issues including the examinations.   NACOR's policy, which is communicated to exam candidates well in advance of the exams, outlines the eight-week exam result communication policy. Exam candidates and the College is notified of the exam results; the College receives a master list of exam results for all exam candidates at the same time the exam candidates are notified by NACOR individually. The College monitors if the deadline has been adhered to and the College also is able to then anticipate when application packages to become registered opticians would be requested.

All NACOR policies pertaining to the exam administration (including timelines for responses and decisions and reasons) are set and reviewed by a panel, which includes voting representatives from all participating provinces (including Ontario). Therefore, our representative has first-hand knowledge and input.

iv. provides training to individuals assessing qualifications

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

v. provides access to records related to the assessment to applicants

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

vi. accommodates applicants with special needs, such as visual impairment

We ensure that any applicant with special needs is given all reasonable consideration.

NACOR has a written policy in place regarding requests of this nature and will work closely with the College of Opticians in each individual case to ensure fairness and objectivity:

"If an applicant requires any special consideration during the examination due to disability, temporary illness, or extenuating circumstances a written letter to NACOR outlining the applicant's specific request along with the reasons for the request must be included with the application form. All pertinent information such as medical documents must be included with the request. Requests will be reviewed and acted upon by the National Examination Committee (of NACOR). Any decision reached by the National Examination Committee is final."

The policy is a part of the NACOR Candidate's Examination Handbook, which is provided to all eligible

exam candidates well in advance of the exam and is available on the NACOR website.

c) If your organization relies on a third party to conduct credential assessments:

i. Explain how the third party determines the level (e.g., baccalaureate, master's, Ph.D.) of the credential presented for assessment.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

WES relies on their research and extensive database information to conduct the credential evaluation process.

ii. Describe the criteria that are applied to determine equivalency.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

iii. Explain how work experience is taken into account.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

d) If your organization relies on a third party to conduct competency assessments:

i. Describe the methodology used to evaluate competency.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

ii. Explain how the methodology used to evaluate competency is validated, and how often it is validated.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

iii. Explain how work experience is used in the assessment of competency.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

e) If your organization relies on a third party to conduct prior learning assessments:

i. Describe the methodology used to evaluate prior learning.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

ii. Explain how the methodology used to evaluate prior learning is validated, and how often it is validated.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

iii. Explain how work experience is used in the assessment of prior learning.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

N/A

f) If your organization relies on a third party to administer examinations:

i. Describe the exam format, scoring method and number of rewrites permitted.

The College of Opticians facilitates the administration of the National Eyeglasses (EG) Exam and the National Contact Lenses (CL) Exam.

The exams are administered by the National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR). Nine provincial regulatory bodies, including the College of Opticians of Ontario use the NACOR exams as a pathway to registration.

The National EG exam measures 40 areas of competence broken down into five sections with 135 enabling objectives. One of the sections is knowledge-based and four are skill-based with clinical judgment-based subsets. Within the five sections there is the possibility of achieving 236 marks. The passing mark is 145 marks or 61%. If a candidate fails the examinations they must repeat the entire examination.

The National CL exam measures 30 areas of competence broken down into five sections with 125 enabling objectives. One of the sections is knowledge-based and four or the sections are skill-based with clinical judgment-based sub-sets. Within the five sections there is a possibility of achieving 216 marks. The passing mark is 147 marks or 68%. If a candidate fails the examinations they must repeat the entire examination.

A candidate is entitled to challenge a NACOR exam a maximum of three times. After the third unsuccessful attempt, if the candidate wishes to become an optician, he/she must comply with an approved upgrading program by the Registration Committee before any further challenge of the exam is permitted.

The National Examination Committee (NEC) is a working sub-committee of NACOR responsible for the development of examination content and policy. The administration of the examinations is designated to NACOR.

ii. Describe how the exam is tested for validity and reliability. If results are below desired levels, describe how you correct the deficiencies.

The NEC meets twice a year to evaluate results and make modifications to content as required.

Critical to the reliability of examination results is the method by which the pass mark is established. The method used by the National Examination Committee (of NACOR) to establish the pass mark for the examinations is the modified Angoff method. Using this method each component of the examination is isolated.

The exams are reviewed by a Panel that consists of representatives of all the provinces that administer the exams. Each member of the examination review panel is asked the question, If 100 candidates of entry level competence were to answer this question, what percentage of candidates would get the correct answer? If there is a divergence in opinion of more than 30%, those delegates estimating at the high and low end of the spectrum are required to provide a rationale to defend their estimation. A second poll is taken, and a third until all delegates have rethought and realigned their assessment and are satisfied in validity of their pass marks. Assessment Strategies uses the data collected to establish the pass mark for the examination.

Examination Security and Integrity

The NEC has developed a bank of questions. Each candidate receives an examination paper with a mix of questions that differs from other candidate's papers. In order to ensure uniformity of exam application, the NEC has developed candidate and examiner instructions for each section of the examination. Examinations are held in various locations throughout the country and NACOR sends an Examination Moderator to each sitting of the examination. The host province supplies a Chief Examiner as well as examiners and models for the clinical portion of the exams. All examination papers are sent from the NACOR office to the Examination Moderator who transports them to the exam site, collects them upon completion of the examination and is responsible for returning the examinations to the NACOR office for marking.

iii. State how often exam questions are updated and the process for doing so.

The NEC met a minimum of four times a year during the development phase of the examinations and continues to meet twice a year to evaluate results and make modifications to the exam bank as required.

Establishing a Pass Mark
Critical to the reliability of examination results is the method by which the pass mark is established. The exams are reviewed by a national examination committee consisting of representatives from all the provinces that administer the exams. The method used by the National Examination Committee to establish the pass mark for the examinations is the modified Angoff method. Using this method each component of the examination is isolated. Each member of the examination review panel is asked the question, If 100 candidates of entry level competence were to answer this question, what percentage of candidates would get the correct answer? If there is a divergence in opinion of more than 30%, those delegates estimating at the high and low end of the spectrum are required to provide a rationale to defend their estimation. A second poll is taken, and a third until all delegates have rethought and realigned their assessment and are satisfied in validity of their pass marks. Assessment Strategies uses the data collected to establish the pass mark for the examination.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Training (10 / 13)

a) Describe the training that your organization provides to:

i. individuals who assess qualifications

The Registration Committee members, as well as the Registration Appeal Panel (RAP) members, attend an orientation at the first meeting of the year presented by the College's legal counsel. This includes a power-point presentation with handouts, case studies and mock applications. The RAP members receive an additional training segment which deals with their specific role and duties.

The orientation also includes a presentation given by the Manager of Professional Programs (the Committee support staff person) which covers the administrative aspects of the College's registration processes.

These orientation sessions are very comprehensive and detailed to ensure that the Registration Committee members have been properly prepared to deal with applications and that the RAP members are prepared to handle any internal appeals.

Other training and ongoing guidance is provided on as needed basis. For example, interview PLAR panel members and registration committee members are encouraged to attend a program entitled "Managing Cultural Differences" hosted by the Ontario Regulators for Access Consortium. The COO covers the registration fee.

ii. individuals who make registration decisions

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The Registration Committee members make registration decisions. They receive an orientation and training session at the first meeting every year, as described above.

iii. individuals who make internal review or appeal decisions

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The Registration Appeal Panel members make internal appeal decisions if there was an internal appeal filed

from the decision of the Registration Committee. They receive an orientation and training session at the first meeting of the Registration Committee every year, as described above.
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Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Agreements on the Recognition of Qualifications (11 / 13)

Examples of agreements on the recognition of professional qualifications include mutual recognition, reciprocity and labour mobility agreements. Such agreements may be national or international, between regulatory bodies, associations or jurisdictions.

a) List any agreements on the recognition of qualifications that were in place during the reporting period.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

1. *Amendments made to the Colleges Registration Regulation in September of 2011, in accordance with the Agreement on Internal Trade.*
2. *Mutual Recognition Agreement Among Opticianry Regulators (MRA):* Ontario signed on the MRA in 2001. The MRA has now been signed by 9 of the 10 provincial authorities. They are: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

b) Explain the impact of these agreements on the registration process or on applicants for registration.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

The College Registration Regulation was amended in September of 2011 in accordance with amendments to Chapter 7 (Labour Mobility) of the Agreement on Internal Trade which came into effect in 2009 to further eliminate or reduce measures that restrict or impair labour mobility in Canada. The College was already a party to a voluntary Mutual Recognition Agreement with the other provinces (except Quebec) prior to the application of Chapter 7 therefore there was virtually no impact as a result of these changes on our registration processes or on applicants registering with us. The new provisions allow for individuals who are licensed or registered in a Canadian jurisdiction where opticianry is a regulated profession under a class or category of registration that is similar to a class or category in Ontario to apply for a certificate of registration without having to undergo any material additional training, experience, examinations or assessments.

The purpose of the MRA is to establish the conditions under which an Optician who is licensed in one province or territory in Canada will have his / her qualifications recognized in another Province or Territory in Canada, which is a party to this Agreement. This means that an Optician who is currently licensed and who is deemed

to be in good standing in their home province will be accepted for licensure in any other province or territory in Canada, which is a party to the MRA. However, all Opticians whose licensing is restricted to eyeglasses only and who wish to move to a province or territory with combined eyeglass and contact lens licensure (for example, Ontario) will be eligible for a temporary license as defined by the legislation of the receiving province or territory. The temporary license shall be issued for the sole purpose of permitting the applicant a reasonable time frame within which to fulfill the contact lens licensing requirements of the receiving province or territory. In Ontario, the temporary license is a Registered Student Optician.

The College has also developed a policy on how to deal with Opticians from other provinces who do not hold both the eyeglasses and the contact lens license. In Ontario, there is no dual-licensing system. Ontario opticians are licensed for both the eyeglasses and contact lenses dispensing. Therefore, there is a material difference in the scope of practice between Ontario and Quebec on one side (combined license) and all other provinces (separate licenses). Subsequently, EG-only opticians in good standing from other provinces may register in Ontario as student opticians while they are in the process of completing their contact lenses upgrading. Once they pass the National Contact Lenses exam, they may apply for a full license in Ontario.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

*** SAME AS LAST YEAR ***

Data Collection (12 / 13)

Languages in which application information materials are available

a) Indicate the languages in which application information materials were available in the reporting year.

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

Paid staff employed by your organization

b) In the table below, enter the number of paid staff employed by your organization in the categories shown, on December 31 of the reporting year.

When providing information for each of the categories in this section, you may want to use decimals if you count your staff using half units. For example, 1 full-time employee and 1 part-time employee might be equivalent to 1.5 employees.

You can enter decimals to the tenths position only. For example, you can enter 1.5 or 7.5 but not 1.55 or 7.52.

Category	Staff
Total staff employed by the regulatory body	10
Staff involved in appeals process	2
Staff involved in registration process	2

Countries where internationally educated applicants were initially trained

c) In the following table, enter the top source countries where your applicants[1] were originally trained in the profession (**excluding** Canada), along with the number of applicants from each of these source countries.

Enter the country names in descending order. (That is, enter the source country for the greatest number of your applicants in the top row, the source country for the second greatest number in the second row, etc.)

Use the dropdown menu provided in each row to select the country.

Note that only one country can be reported in each row. If two or more countries are tied, enter the information for these tied countries in separate rows.

Country of training (Canada excluded)	Number of applicants in the reporting year
India	4
Philippines	3
Iran	2
Iraq	2
Lebanon	2
U.S.	2
Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of	1
Mexico	1
Jordan	1
Pakistan	1

[1]Persons who have applied to start the process for entry to the profession.
Select "n/a" from the drop-down list if you do not track this information. Enter "0" in a "Number of

applicants" field if you track the information, but the correct value is zero.

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained

d) Indicate where your members[2] were initially trained in the profession (use only whole numbers; do not enter commas or decimals).

The numbers to be reported in the **Members** row are the numbers on December 31st of the reporting year. For example, if you are reporting registration practices for the calendar year 2009, you should report the numbers of members in the different categories on December 31st of 2009.

	Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in the profession (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)					
	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
Members on December 31st of the reporting year	1877	214	9	22	424	**2546**

[2] Persons who are currently able to use the protected title or professional designation of the profession.

Enter "n/a" if you do not track this information. Enter "0" if you track the information, but the correct value is zero.

Additional comments:

The College registers 3 classes of registration: Registered Opticians, Registered Intern Opticians and registered Student Opticians. The above number only includes Registered Opticians, although Student and Intern Opticians are also the College's members. However, according to the Registration Regulation, only Registered Opticians can use the protected title of "Registered Opticians" - RO.

Applications your organization processed in the past year

e) State the number of applications your organization processed in the reporting year (use only whole numbers; do not enter commas or decimals).

	Jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)

from January 1st to December 31st of the reporting year	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
New applications received	504	15	0	19	4	**542**
Applicants actively pursuing licensing (applicants who had some contact with your organization in the reporting year)	24	2	0	0	1	**27**
Inactive applicants (applicants who had no contact with your organization in the reporting year)	2	0	0	3	0	**5**
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Applicants who became FULLY registered members	120	11	0	1	3	**135**
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence[3] but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence[3]	360	2	0	0	0	**362**

[3] An alternative class of licence enables its holder to practise with limitations, but additional registration requirements must be met in order for the member to be fully licenced. Please list and describe below the alternative classes of licence that your organization grants, such as student, intern, associate, provisional or temporary.

Enter "n/a" if you do not track this information. Enter "0" if you track the information, but the correct value is zero.

Additional comments:

Registered student opticians and registered intern opticians are individuals who are allowed to do the controlled act of dispensing only under the supervision or direction of a registered optician.

	Class of licence	Description
a)	Registered Student Optician	Students enrolled in an opticianry program approved by MTCU or applicants who have applied to become registered as a registered optician or a registered intern optician and who are in the process of completing additional training as ordered by the Registration Committee may apply for a certificate of registration as a student optician.
b)	Registered Intern Optician	In order to apply for a certificate of registration as an intern optician, applicants must have successfully completed and graduated from a MTCU approved opticianry program or one deemed equivalent or if the applicant was ordered by the Registration Committee to complete additional training must have done so. Intern opticians are eligible to sit the national opticianry examinations.
c)		
d)		
e)		
f)		

g)	
h)	
i)	
j)	

Reviews and appeals your organization processed in the past year

f) State the number of reviews and appeals your organization processed in the reporting year (use only whole numbers; do not enter commas or decimals).

from January 1st to December 31st of the reporting year	Jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)					
	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
Applications that were subject to an internal review or that were referred to a statutory committee of your governing council, such as a Registration Committee	0	0	1	10	0	**11**
Applicants who initiated an appeal of a registration decision	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
Appeals heard	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
Registration decisions changed following an appeal	0	0	0	0	0	**0**

Enter "n/a" if you do not track this information. Enter "0" if you track the information, but the correct value is zero.

Additional comments:

There were no appeals to HPARB from the decisions of the Registration Committee in 2012.

Please identify and explain the changes in your registration practices relevant to this section that occurred during the reporting year.

Certification (13 / 13)

I hereby certify that:

i. I have reviewed the information submitted in this Fair Registration Practices Report (the"Report").
ii. To the best of my knowledge:
   - all information required to be provided in the Report is included; and
   - the information contained in the Report is accurate.

Name of individual with authority to sign on behalf of the organization: Abena Buahene

Title: Registrar

Date: March 26, 2013