

## **Professional Optometric Degree Standards**

Adopted by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE)  
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***\*Use of these standards is mandatory for all programs being evaluated  
on or after July 1, 2017.***

### **Standard I – Mission, Goals and Objectives**

- 1.1 The program must have a statement of its mission, and the goals and objectives by which it intends to fulfill its mission.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Program's mission, goals and objectives*

1.1.1 The program must publish its mission and goals so that the information is readily and publicly available on the program's website.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Web site*

1.1.2 The goals and objectives must include teaching and learning, research or scholarly activity, patient care, and service.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Program's goals and objectives*

- 1.2 The mission, goals, and objectives must result in a professional optometric degree program whose graduates possess the attributes, knowledge, skills, and ethical values required for independently practicing contemporary optometry.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Program's statement of attributes, knowledge, skills and ethical values*

- 1.3 The program must identify and use outcomes measures to evaluate its effectiveness by documenting the extent to which its goals and objectives have been met, and must use such assessment to improve its performance. Such measures must include but not be limited to graduation rates, and results from National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO), Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) or equivalent testing agencies.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Outcomes measures including but not limited to*
  - *Graduation rate*
  - *NBEO passage rates for all first-time takers*
  - *OEBC passage rates for all first-time takers*
  - *Licensing examination results*
  - *Career Placement, i.e. proportion of graduates employed, enrolled in a residency, or pursuing further education in optometry or a related field*
- *Analysis of outcomes measure*
- *Description of actions taken as a result of analysis*

1.3.1 Within six years of initial matriculation, at least 80% of entering students must be (1) licensed to practice optometry, or (2) pass all three parts of the NBEO or (3) pass the equivalent Canadian registration examination.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Outcomes measures used including but not limited to*
  - *NBEO passage rates*
  - *NBEO ultimate pass rates for entering cohorts*
  - *OEBC passage rates*
  - *Licensing examination results*
  - *Licensure data on graduates*
  - *Career placement*
- *Analysis of outcomes measure*
  - *Description of actions taken as a result of analysis*

1.4 The program must publish on its website current and reliable information on its performance with respect to student achievement. Data must include, but need not be limited to: graduation rates; attrition rates; annual institutional pass rates for all first-time takers of NBEO parts I, II, and III and the ultimate passage rate for each cohort graduating within each of the three previous academic years, or pass rates on OEBC or equivalent examinations.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Published performance measures*
  - *Graduation rate, i.e. four and five year program completion rates for each of the three most recent graduating classes*
  - *Attrition rates for each of the three most recent academic years, i.e. proportion of students leaving the program for academic or other reasons*
  - *First time pass rate for each part of the NBEO exam and ultimate pass rate for each cohort graduating within each of the three previous academic years*
  - *Career placement*

1.5 The program must engage in an ongoing, systematic process of planning and self-study and must review on a regular basis its program mission, goals, and objectives and revise them as necessary.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of review process*
- *Evidence of involvement of stakeholders*
- *Supporting documents from review, such as meeting agenda or minutes*
- *Documents which show actions taken with regard to mission, goals and objectives*

## **Standard II – Curriculum**

2.1 The optometric curriculum must fulfill the intent of the mission statement of the program to prepare graduates to independently practice contemporary optometry.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of curriculum*

- *Curricular learning objectives*
- *Clinical competencies*
- *Course learning objectives*
- *Relevant educational outcome measures*

2.2 The program must offer an optometric curriculum of at least four academic years.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of curriculum*

2.3 Each student's achievement of curricular outcomes must be assessed.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Course examinations*
- *Laboratory practical examinations*
- *Clinical evaluations*
- *Pre- and post-clinical assessments (proficiency examinations)*
- *Course grades*

2.4 The program must employ a curriculum management plan that includes:

- ongoing curriculum review and evaluation processes that include input from faculty, students, administration and other appropriate stakeholders; and
- evaluation of all courses with respect to the defined objectives of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Minutes of meetings in which curriculum is evaluated*
- *Description of actions taken as a result of curricular evaluations*
- *Student assessment of courses and instruction*
- *Defined program competencies*
- *Course syllabi including learning objectives*

2.5 If instruction in the optometric program is shared with another program or institution, the optometric program must demonstrate primary administrative responsibility for the creation, supervision and implementation of its curriculum.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Documents delineating responsibilities in shared programs*

2.6 Basic science instruction must provide a foundation of knowledge in physical, biomedical and behavioral sciences essential for clinical optometric care.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of curriculum*
- *Results from Part I of NBEO examinations*
- *Results from OEBC examination*
- *Outcome assessment relative to curricular objectives*

2.7 Clinical instruction and practice must consist of didactic, laboratory, and supervised clinical experience in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, and management of patients.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of curriculum*
- *Results from Part II and III of NBEO*

- *Results from OEBC*
- *Outcome assessment relative to curricular objectives*

2.7.1 Externship rotations must complement, but not substitute for, the foundational clinical experiences that must occur at sites described by Standard 8.1.1.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Learning objectives of externship sites*
- *Learning objectives of the core clinical experience*

2.8 The quantity, quality and variety of experiences in the supervised care of patients must be sufficient to develop clinical competency to independently practice contemporary optometry.

2.8.1 The number of patients seen, as well as diagnoses for each of these patients, must be tracked and documented for each student. These data must distinguish between patient encounters experienced during vision screenings, encounters in which supervised patient care was provided by one student, encounters in which supervised patient care was shared by more than one student, and encounters in which the experience was by observation only.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of clinical experience for each individual student*
- *Description of processes used to measure quantity, quality and variety of experiences*
- *Patient logs and an analysis of logs*
- *Student portfolio of clinical experience*

2.9 The program must establish a set of clinical competencies necessary for the contemporary practice of optometry and evaluate the student's attainment of these competencies.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of clinical competencies*
- *Completed medical record reviews*
- *Faculty evaluation of clinical performance*
- *Referral letters and other communications*
- *Course and clinical learning objectives*

2.9.1 The graduate must be able to identify, record and analyze pertinent history and problems presented by the patient.

2.9.2 The graduate must be able to examine and evaluate the patient to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis.

2.9.3 The graduate must be able to formulate a rational treatment and management plan and understand the implications of various treatment and management options.

2.9.4 The graduate must be able to provide preventive care, patient education and counseling.

2.9.5 The graduate must be able to use the knowledge of optometry's role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of the patients and populations being served.

*(version of 2.9.5 effective July 1, 2022)* The graduate must be able to use the knowledge of optometry's role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of the patients and diverse populations being served.

2.9.6 The graduate must be able to apply knowledge of professional, ethical, legal, and public health principles to the delivery of optometric care.

*(version of 2.9.6 effective July 1, 2022)* The graduate must be able to apply knowledge of professional, ethical, legal, public health, and diversity, equity, and inclusion principles to the delivery of optometric care.

2.9.7 The graduate must be able to demonstrate understanding of research principles and conduct in order to critically assess the literature.

2.9.8 The graduate must be able to effectively communicate orally and in writing with other professionals and patients.

*(version of 2.9.8 effective July 1, 2022)* The graduate must be able to demonstrate effective and culturally competent communications, both oral and written, with other professionals and patients.

2.9.9 The graduate must be able to demonstrate basic life support skills for emergencies encountered in optometric practice.

2.9.10 The graduate must demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and philosophy of optometric practice management.

2.10 There must be written and signed affiliation agreements between the program and its externship sites that define, at a minimum, the responsibilities of each party related to the educational program for optometry students.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of affiliation agreements*

2.10.1 The program must establish and adhere to criteria for the selection of externship sites. These criteria must address at a minimum:

- Space and equipment
- Qualifications of supervising faculty
- Clinical privileges of supervising faculty where applicable
- Clinical practice guidelines employed at the site

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copy of criteria for selection*
- *Copy of site selection procedure*

2.10.2 The program must monitor externship sites to ensure they are providing clinical experiences that meet the program's mission, goals, and objectives

2.10.2.1 Each site must be visited by personnel designated by the program within one year of placement of the first extern(s) and thereafter on a periodic basis.

2.10.2.2 Program approved learning objectives must be established for all externship sites, and student performance must be evaluated using these objectives.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of monitoring procedure*
- *Student assessments of externship sites*
- *Administrative structure to monitor sites*
- *Analysis of clinical experience provided at sites*

2.10.3 The program must provide educational direction, including orientation, training and development, to the externship sites.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Externship manual*
- *Description of in-service programs, training and other educational guidance provided to externships*

### **Standard III - Research and Scholarly Activity**

3.1 The program must support, encourage and maintain research and scholarly activity.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Policies that encourage research and scholarly activity*
- *Financial support*
- *Internal grant programs*
- *Description of research facilities*
- *List of faculty publications*
- *List of current grants and contracts*
- *Program infrastructure support (e.g. grant writing, biostatistics, graphics, technology)*
- *Mentoring and training opportunities*

3.2 The program must provide opportunities for students to participate in research and other scholarly activities mentored by faculty.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Relevant course syllabi*
- *Samples of research projects in which students participated*
- *Samples of other scholarly activities in which students participated*

### **Standard IV – Governance, Regional Accreditation, Administration, and Finances**

4.1 The doctor of optometry program must be offered by an autonomous unit organized as a school or college of optometry (within a university or as an independent entity.) This

includes autonomy to manage the professional program within published policies and procedures, as well as applicable state and federal regulations.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Appointment letter for program's chief executive officer*
- *Board of Trustees policies*
- *Administrative policies*
- *Organizational Chart*
- *Position descriptions of key administrators*

4.1.1 The program must adhere to written policies, including, but not limited to, conflict of interest, due process, disclosure, non-discrimination, confidentiality of records and fiscal accountability.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Board of Trustees Policies*
- *Administrative policies*

4.1.2 The program must be conducted and organized in such a way as to facilitate open communication among administrators, faculty, students, staff and other constituencies.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Program bylaws*
- *Organizational chart*
- *Surveys of constituents*
- *Communications among constituents*
- *Meeting minutes*
- *Electronic communications*

4.1.3 The institutional structure must clearly assign authority and responsibility for the hiring, on-going evaluation, retention and discharge of the program's chief executive officer.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Board of Trustees policies*
- *Appointment letter*
- *Organizational chart*
- *Governance policies*
- *Evaluation instrument or procedures*

4.2 The program must be conducted at an institution that is accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or is recognized by a provincial ministry of education in Canada.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Letter of institutional accreditation*
- *Institutional accreditation report*

4.3 The program's chief executive officer or chief academic officer must have a professional optometric degree, and both must be qualified by education, training and experience to provide leadership in optometric education, scholarly activity, and patient care.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Curriculum vitae*
- *Copy of transcript*
- *Copy of diploma*
- *Description of process to verify credentials*

4.4 There must be a clear definition of the chief executive officer's authority and responsibility for the program.

4.4.1 The program's chief executive officer must have the authority and responsibility for fiscal management of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Position description*
- *Administrative policies*

4.5 The program must utilize clearly defined reporting relationships, performance expectations, and assessment procedures for all administrators.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Organizational chart*
- *Administrative policies*
- *Documentation or narrative describing performance and assessment procedures*

4.6 The program must demonstrate that it possesses the financial resources required to develop and sustain the program on a continuing basis and to accomplish its mission, goals and objectives.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Applicable financial and/or budgetary documents*
- *Analysis of historical financial resources*
- *Projection of financial resources*

4.6.1 The program must utilize sound and generally accepted financial management procedures to assure effective monitoring, control and accountability of its fiscal resources.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Most recent audited financial statement*
- *Administrative policies and procedures*

4.7 The program must ensure that support from outside entities does not compromise the teaching, clinical or research components of the program.

*Examples of evidence:*

- *Written agreements(s)*
- *Contracts between the institution/program and sponsor(s) (For example: contract(s)/agreement(s) related to facilities, funding, faculty allocations, etc.)*



- *Copies of institutional policies or procedures regarding commercial sponsorship and conflicts of interest*

4.7.1 The authority and responsibility for matters relating to curriculum, student selection, faculty selection and administration must rest within the program.

### **Standard V – Faculty**

5.1 The number, qualifications, expertise and experience of faculty members must be sufficient to meet the stated mission and goals of the program.

#### *Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of faculty rank classifications (i.e., associate, assistant, professor, clinical associate, etc.) with description of expected workload and expected contributions.*
- *Census of the faculty by classification*
- *Description of significant changes in faculty census and student-faculty ratio over the accreditation period.*
- *Curricula vitae of faculty*
- *Workload formula and implementation grid by semester (demonstrating application of policy referenced in standard 5.5)*
- *List of faculty teaching responsibilities*

5.1.1 Faculty members must hold an earned terminal degree or first professional degree from an institution accredited by a recognized agency or its foreign equivalent or have certification or licensure related to their primary instructional assignment.

#### *Examples of Evidence*

- *List of faculty members with abbreviated biographies and teaching responsibilities*
- *Copies of faculty CVs (on-site)*
- *Description of process to verify faculty credentials*

5.2 The program must demonstrate an effective mechanism for faculty participation in decision-making related to the optometric education program.

#### *Examples of Evidence*

- *A list of faculty committees and membership*
- *Schedule of faculty meetings in past two years*
- *Minutes of faculty meetings in past two years (on-site)*
- *Faculty charter, bylaws, contract, standard operating procedure, etc.*
- *Description of faculty committee structure, membership, objectives, reporting procedures*
- *Meeting schedules and minutes*
- *Evidence of governance issues resolved or identified by the faculty process (i.e. agendas, minutes, formal letters, white papers, votes)*

5.3 The program must allocate adequate time and resources for faculty to enhance their skills and leadership abilities in education, service, research and scholarly activity, and patient care.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of how faculty workload is determined*
- *Description of development programs*
- *Sabbatical policies*
- *Faculty technology support*
- *Description of orientation and mentoring programs*

5.4 The program must use a faculty evaluation process that establishes goals and assesses performance of each faculty member.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Policy and procedure manuals*
- *Template of evaluation instruments*

5.5 The program must follow published policies and procedures for faculty recruitment and retention, promotion, tenure (where it exists), academic assignments and responsibilities, sabbaticals, reporting relationships, grievance, and benefits.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Workload policy*
- *Organizational chart*
- *Procedure and policy manuals*

5.6 The program must demonstrate its efforts to recruit a diverse faculty.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Announcement and publication of open positions*
- *Recruitment plans*

## **Standard VI – Students**

6.1 The program must have a fair and impartial process that results in the admission of students who possess the intelligence, integrity, and maturity necessary for them to become competent doctors of optometry.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Historical admissions statistics including*
  - *Number of applicants*
  - *Profile of entering class with details on*
    - *Gender*
    - *Academic ranking/attributes*
      - *Average OAT scores*
      - *Average GPAs*
    - *Racial/ethnic information*
- *Recruitment materials*
- *Recruitment plan*
- *Admission policy*
- *Attrition rates*
- *NBEO results*

- *OEBC results*
- *Four-year graduation rate*

6.2 The program must establish and publish the criteria considered in selecting students who have the potential for success in the program and the profession.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Examples of publications*
  - *Catalog*
  - *Web site*
- *Admissions criteria*
  - *Pre-requisites*
  - *Admissions test scores*
  - *GPA's*
  - *Interview*
  - *Essays*
  - *Letters of reference*
  - *Deadlines for submission*
  - *Application fees*

6.2.1 The program must adhere to fair and impartial policies and procedures during the admissions process.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Admission policy, criteria and procedure*

6.2.2 The program must require that the accepted applicants have completed all prerequisites and at least an equivalent of three academic years of postsecondary education in an accredited institution prior to beginning the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Admission policy, criteria and procedure*
- *Catalog*
- *Student records*

6.3 The program must provide information to incoming students regarding pre-matriculation health standards, access to health care, personal counseling, and standards for immunization against infectious disease.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Publications that describe the above*

6.4 There must be an institutional commitment to serving students, including an organizational element devoted to student affairs.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Organizational chart*
- *Description of duties of element devoted to student affairs*
- *Position descriptions of personnel in student affairs*

6.4.1 At a minimum, student services must include financial aid and debt counseling, academic counseling, learning support services, career placement assistance, and access to information technology support.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Organizational chart*
- *Position description of personnel in student affairs*
- *Student handbook*
- *Web site*

6.5 The program must maintain an orderly, accurate, confidential, secure and permanent system of student records.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Policies on student record access*

6.6. The program's publications, written policies, advertising, and student recruitment must present an accurate representation of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Publications, written policies, advertising, Web sites*

6.6.1 The program must publish and adhere to policies and procedures on academic and professional standards, grading, attendance, disciplinary ~~conduct~~ actions, retention, dismissal and reinstatement, non-discrimination policy, due process, academic calendar, tuition, fees, refund policy, honors, scholarship and awards, and other related matters.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Documents that describe above*
  - *College catalog*
  - *Student handbook*
  - *Web site*
  - *Honor code*

6.6.2 The program must publish and adhere to policies and procedures regarding student grievances and must maintain records of receipt, investigation, adjudication and resolution of such complaints.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Documents that describe above*
  - *College catalog*
  - *Student handbook*
  - *Web site*
- *Record of complaints (on site)*

6.7 The program must provide opportunities for students to access and communicate with faculty and administrators of the program.

*Examples of evidence*

- *Faculty and administration office hours*
- *Agenda, minutes, and/or reports of organized meetings between administration and students.*

6.8 The program must provide opportunities for students to participate in student governance, advocacy and other leadership development activities.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Student governance documents*

- *Organizational structure of student/school interactions*
- *List of student committees*
- *Student involvement in program committees*

6.9 The program must make available to students information on postgraduate educational programs, such as residencies, graduate degrees and fellowship training opportunities.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Publications that provide information on the above*

## **Standard VII – Facilities, Equipment and Resources**

7.1 The teaching and patient care facilities and equipment must be appropriate to fulfill the mission, goals and objectives of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Documents or narrative description of physical plant, and its utilization*
- *Floor plan of facilities*
- *Documents or narrative description of any planned changes in facilities*
- *Documentation or current description of equipment relative to quantity, condition and currency*
- *Documentation of facility certification by external agencies*
- *Classroom technology*

7.1.1 The program must plan and provide for the repair, maintenance and replacement of physical facilities, ophthalmic instruments and other equipment, and computers and other technology infrastructure.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Replacement policies and schedule*
- *Description of available financial resources for equipment repair and replacement*
- *Description of personnel and facilities for equipment and physical facility maintenance and repair*
- *Plans for renovation or acquisition of facilities*
- *Equipment acquisition plans*

7.2 The program must provide access to well-maintained library, study space and information facilities, sufficient in size, breadth of holdings, and information technology to support the program's education and other missions.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *List of library holdings*
- *Library floor plan*
- *Electronic information resources*
- *Description of Information Technology (IT)*
  - *IT support services*
  - *Computer and IT resources*

7.3 The library and information services staff must support the needs of the faculty, residents and students of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Hours of library service*
- *Organizational chart for library and information services*
- *Curriculum vitae for key information resources personnel*
- *Information resource services available*
- *Surveys of patron satisfaction and use*
- *Summary of training provided to faculty, students and staff regarding utilization of library and information services*

7.4 The program must have an emergency preparedness plan.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Emergency preparedness plan.*

### **Standard VIII – Clinic Management and Patient Care Policies**

8.1 The program must have or be assured the use of a clinical patient care program sufficient to fulfill its mission, goals and objectives.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of institution's clinical patient care program*
- *Description of affiliated clinical patient care programs*
- *Description of patient demographics*

8.1.1 The clinical patient care program must include an integrated teaching clinic primarily staffed by faculty members who are employed by the program.

8.2 A coordinated system of clinical governance, administration, management and evaluation must be followed by all clinics managed by the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Clinic administration organization chart*
- *Description of clinic administration*
- *Clinic management policies*
- *Procedures for evaluating clinic administrators*
- *Procedures for evaluating effectiveness of clinical operation*
- *Position description(s) for principal administrators of clinical program*

8.2.1 The program must publish and make available to staff, student clinicians, residents and faculty, a clinic manual which includes all clinic policies and procedures.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Clinic manual*
- *Electronic clinic manual*

8.2.2 The program must verify credentials of faculty members who serve in the clinic.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Faculty credentials*
- *Credentialing process*

8.2.3 The program must define the scope and extent of clinical privileges for each faculty member who serves in the clinic.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of procedures to grant clinical privileges*
- *Completed privileging documents*

8.2.4 The patient record must allow for efficient review of the patient's condition and any pertinent previous care provided at the program's clinical facility.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Copies of written or electronic patient records (on-site)*

8.2.5 The clinic must conduct a continuous quality assessment, improvement and compliance program that provides for remediation when deficiencies are identified.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Description of quality assessment program*
- *Evaluation of clinic services by staff, patients or students*
- *Examples of remediation of deficiencies*
- *Description of faculty/staff/student in-service programs*

8.2.6 The clinic must publish or post policies and procedures on the patient's rights and responsibilities.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Posted patient bill of rights*
- *Handouts which include patient bill of rights*
- *Publication which include patient bill of rights*
- *Informed consent documents*

8.2.7 The clinic must have written procedures for receiving and resolving patient complaints, grievances and appeals.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Documents with relevant policies*
- *Files of complaint, grievances and appeals since the most recent site visit (on site)*
- *Clinic manual*

8.2.8 Clinic programs must utilize established procedures to address risk management such as liability, security and safety.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Liability policies including professional liability*
- *Security policies*
- *Safety policies*
- *Emergency procedures*
- *Infection control policies*

8.3 The program must provide eye and vision care services, which are consistent with accepted and well-established health care standards such as clinical practice guidelines.

*Examples of Evidence*

- *Adopted clinical practice guidelines*
- *Description of access to clinical practice guidelines*
- *Quality assurance program*