

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Registration Committee

DATE: December 2, 2024

SUBJECT: 14.1 Addendum to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy

For Decision For Information Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To consider an extension of the temporary addendum to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy.

Background:

In 2020, the Board of Directors approved a temporary addendum to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy to address the challenges being posed to students in obtaining the requisite number of contact lens fits as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The temporary addendum to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy extended eligibility to qualify as a contact lens mentor to include instructors teaching contact lens courses in academic settings.

In December 2023, the Board extended the aforementioned policy addendum until December 31, 2024. The addendum previously received one-year extensions in 2021 and 2022.

For Consideration:

At its meeting on November 13, 2024, the Registration Committee considered the concerns identified by educational program coordinators about student fittings. The Committee recognized that students in some opticianry programs continue to face challenges in finding preceptors to supervise the required Rigid Gas Permeable (RGP) lens fits.

The Committee noted that, in early 2025, the College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) will undertake a comprehensive review of its entry to practice practicum requirement. Among other areas concerning practical requirements for entry-to-practice, the review will address the difficulty in sourcing RGP fittings and whether this requirement is still reflective of entry-to-practice contact lens fittings.

In light of the information above, the Committee recommends maintaining the status quo with regard to the temporary provision to permit contact lens course instructors to act as contact lens mentors until the review is completed and the new practicum requirements are put in place. For the practicality of finding mentorship, the Committee recommends that this temporary provision remains in effect until revoked by the Board.

Public Interest Considerations

The College has a mandate to ensure that it continues to register qualified and competent opticians to ensure patient safety, and that it does so in a manner that does not create unnecessary or excessive barriers to registration.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations

The Registration Committee considered that the proposed extension will ensure that graduating students are able to complete the required fittings within a reasonable timeframe and subsequently register as an optician, which will balance their need to enter the profession against the need for the COO to maintain financial stability by enabling a yearly influx of registrants.

Risks Management Considerations

The Committee did not identify any concerns from the organizational risk standpoint.

Recommendation/Action Required:

That the Board approve the proposed extension to the addendum to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy as recommended by the Registration Committee.