FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER

COMMISSAIRE À **L'ÉQUITÉ**

## Fair Registration Practices Report 2020

The Fair Registration Practices Report was created as required in the:

- Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA) s.20 and 23(1), for the regulated professions named in Schedule 1 of FARPACTA
- Health Professions Procedural Code set out in Schedule 2 of the Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA) s. 22.7(1) and 22.9(1), for health colleges

Guidelines for this report are available to download as a .pdf on the OFC website.
https://www.fairnesscommissioner.com/en/Publications/Pages/Guidelines.aspx

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Name of the regulated profession: Opticianry
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Sections of the Report

## Qualitative Information

The following qualitative information is collected for the purpose of highlighting a regulator's enhancements to improve fair access year over year, including actions that result from recommendations made in the OFC's Assessment of Registration Practices.

For each of the categories below, where applicable, please describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year by your organization or a third-party for the purpose of changing fair access.

Please also describe the impact of these improvements/changes on applicants. If you have been working on improvements/changes over the last year that have not yet been implemented, describe your progress and the expected impact the improvements/changes will have on applicants and your organization.

Provide as much detail as possible. This can include the rationale for the improvements/changes, relevant findings from preliminary work leading up to the improvements/changes, methodology, relevant dates and anything else you think is important.

Include as much supporting material as possible to support your description (e.g., relevant reports, policies, protocols, websites, other documents and anything else you think is important). This material can be provided in the form of hyperlinks to electronic sources.

**a.** Requirements for registration, including acceptable alternatives

i)      Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year
No changes this year

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants
No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization
No changes this year

**b.** Assessment of qualifications

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

No changes this year

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
        No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
        No changes this year

**c.** Provision of timely decisions, responses, and reasons

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
        No changes this year

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
        No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
        No changes this year

**d.** Fees

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

        Annual registration fees continue to be subject to a 2.5% increase per year as
        set out in the College's by-laws and approved by the Board of Directors in 2015.
        Annual registration fee increases are published in a fee schedule in article 5.2 of
        the College's by-laws, available on the College's website:
        https://collegeofopticians.ca/sites/default/uploads/files/MASTER%20BY-
        LAWS(1).pdf
        In 2020, the annual registration fee for registered opticians increased from $944
        (plus HST) to $968 (plus HST). In 2020, the annual registration fee for student
        and intern opticians increased from $139 (plus HST) to $142 (plus HST).

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants

        The availability of the fee schedule, which shows fee increases from 2016 to
        2021 allows applicants and registrants to anticipate the change and prepare for
        it.

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization

The nominal fee increase allows the College to work towards recovering operational costs associated with the College's regulatory mandate for registration, including investment in improvements to registration processes.

**e.** Timelines

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

Starting in June 2020, student and intern opticians were able to renew their registration with the College through the online submission system. Additionally, the College is working on finalizing its online application platform for students, interns and registered opticians. The new platform is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2021.

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants

Migrating processing of applications and the student/intern annual renewal online serves to simplify the process and ensures a quick response time to applicants.

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization

The College's online database system supports the College's strategic initiative to maintain a paperless registration system. Additionally, processing applications and conducting renewals online will significantly improve processing times and provision of information.

**f.** Policies, procedures and/or processes, including by-laws

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

*Delegation of Approval of Initial PLAR Applications*
As a means of expediting the first stage of the application process, the Registration Committee delegated review and approval of all initial Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) applications to staff provided that applications met all necessary requirements.

*Conducting PLAR Interviews in French*
The College established a process for conducting PLAR interviews for applicants requesting service in French. The College adopted a model comparable to an English-speaking panel, consisting of two French speaking registered opticians, a public member, and a staff member.

*Remote Administration of CGA and PLAR Interviews*
The College developed a process for remote administration of the Competency Gap Analysis (CGA) and PLAR interviews in collaboration with the College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) and the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR). Starting in July 2020, applicants were provided with an option to complete the CGA and PLAR interviews remotely as a comparable alternative.

*Implementation of Vulnerable Sector Checks for new Applicants*
The College introduced a requirement for individuals applying for registration as a registered optician to provide a vulnerable sector check. The new policy on [Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings](#) amends the Policy Dealing with Convictions, Findings and Ongoing Proceedings. With regard to students and interns, the College will continue with its current self-reporting practice. The policy received Board approval in May 2020 and came into effect on January 1, 2021.

*Amendments to Student/Intern Supervision Policy and Contact Lens Mentor Policy*
The College amended the [Contact Lens Mentor Policy](#) and the [Student/Intern Supervision Policy](#) to expand the eligibility criteria to be recognized as a contact lens mentor, or to supervise students/interns to include the following individuals:

a) Persons registered as an optician in another Canadian jurisdiction, where opticianry is a regulated profession for a minimum of three years or hold a combination of registration with the College of Opticians of Ontario and an equivalent College regulating opticianry in another Canadian jurisdiction for a minimum of three years. Previously, candidates were required to have been registered in Ontario for a minimum of three years.
b) For Contact Lens Mentors, persons who demonstrate having completed a minimum number of contact lens fittings during the previous three years. Previously, all candidates were required to be registered with the College for at least three years before becoming eligible. This amendment permits individuals with demonstrated experience prior to registration (e.g. from another jurisdiction) to be eligible, and aligns the Contact Lens Mentor Policy with the Student/Intern Supervision Policy.

The proposed policy changes received Board approval in July 2020.

*Contact Lens Mentor Eligibility Criteria for Academics*
The College acknowledged significant challenges that opticianry students in Ontario were facing to complete their required contact lens fittings due to the pandemic and identified the need to consider ways to permit students better access to contact lens mentors. Accordingly, in July 2020, the Board approved an amendment to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy to grant temporary eligibility to individuals working as instructors in accredited education programs. The temporary mentor status will remain in effect until December 31, 2021.

*Administration of National Examinations During the Pandemic*
National opticianry examinations are administered by the College in conjunction with the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR). There are typically two examination sessions held in Ontario per year; one in Spring and one in Fall, with approximately 230 students participating. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Spring exam session was cancelled. The College worked with NACOR and Seneca College to hold a Fall examination session for 113 students. Necessary logistical modifications were made to stay consistent with public health guidelines and emergency orders regarding group size, physical distancing, and best practices around infection control.

*Expanding Peer-to-Peer Policy to Eyeglass Fittings*
In light of ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns regarding student fittings identified by the educational institutions and other stakeholders, the College adopted an addendum to the [Contact Lens Fittings policy](#) to temporarily allow students to meet registration requirements by performing up to 25% of eyeglass fittings on a peer-to-peer basis (i.e. in a role-play/standardized patient setting in a classroom or dispensary setting, as opposed to on actual patients). The proposed policy change received Board approval in October 2020 and will remain in effect until December 31, 2021.

*By-Law Amendment: Registration Fee Adjustment*
To offset the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on registrants, the Board approved a by-law amendment to reduce the 2021 registration fees for registered opticians by $250.

*By-Law Amendment: Removing Gender Information from the Public Register*
The Board approved an amendment to by-law article 15(6)(i) to no longer post gender identification collected from the registrants on the public register on the grounds that posting gender information could result in discrimination against an optician on the basis of gender.

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants

*Policy Amendments*
Updates to the College's policies, procedures and processes are intended to increase operational efficiency and enforce consistency in College decision-making. The College is working with its stakeholders to ensure that students, interns, supervisors and educational institutions are fully aware of the amendments to the Student/Intern Supervision, Contact Lens Mentor and Contact Lens Fitting policies and have adequate time to make the necessary practice adjustments to ensure policy compliance.

The amendments to these policies had the effect of:
- Expanding student/intern access to supervisors and contact lens mentors by making it easier for individuals to qualify as supervisors/mentors
- Facilitating the ability of students and interns to meet registration requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily making instructors eligible to supervise contact lens fittings, and by permitting up to 25% of eyeglass fittings to be done on a peer-to-peer basis.

Impacts of Policy on Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings will be discussed in the 2021 Fair Registration Practices report.

*National Examinations*
In spite of the ongoing pandemic, 113 students were able to complete the national examinations in Fall 2020 as a result of the modified examination session administered by the College in conjunction with NACOR and Seneca College. Additional examination sessions have been scheduled for 2021 (including the first French-language examination session in Ontario) to ensure that any students still needing to complete the exam have an opportunity to do so without further delay.

*2021 Registration Fee Adjustment*
Opticians were surveyed in Summer 2020 to gauge the impact that a registration fee reduction would have on their likelihood of renewing their registration for 2021. Approximately 46% of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to renew their registration if a fee reduction were approved. In total, 95% of registered opticians chose to renew their registration for 2021, which is in line with previous years.

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization

In the majority of cases, policy revisions are a direct example of the College responding to feedback from a variety of sources. Policy and process clarifications reduce applicant and registrant inquiries and assist staff in addressing those in a consistent manner. By-law changes relating to the types of information which is published on the public register improves transparency to the public.

Impacts of Policy on Vulnerable Sector Check and Applicants with Charges or Findings will be discussed in the 2021 Fair Registration Practices report.

**g.** Resource for applicants

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

*Website Updates and Enhancements*
The College launched a new website geared towards easier navigation and streamlined use. Applicants can easily locate information about the application process and access additional resources.
https://collegeofopticians.ca/applicants/accredited-education-applicant
https://collegeofopticians.ca/applicants/unaccredited-education-applicant
https://collegeofopticians.ca/applicants/nationally-registered-applicant

The following new resources were added to the College's website in 2020:

- A self-assessment tool for applicants to determine with registration pathway is applicable to them: https://collegeofopticians.ca/applicants
- A glossary to acquaint applicants with terminology used throughout the website: https://collegeofopticians.ca/applicants/glossary-of-terms
- A pre-assessment tool for internationally educated applicants to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses and how their skills and qualifications compare to the requirements for registering as an optician in Canada: https://becomeanoptician.com/how-to-become-an-optician/become-a-canadian-optician/international-applicants/

*French Language Resources*
In anticipation of the first French-language examination session in 2021, all relevant application forms, registration policies and communication templates have been translated into French.

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants

The new website provides applicants with a clear menu structure and allows users to navigate between pages quickly and efficiently, making resources and information easily accessible. The College strived to improve the clarity of information provided to applicants in order to allow them to better understand the application process and the options available to them.

Additionally, having the registration materials available in French enables francophone applicants to receive communications and services in their preferred official language.

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization

The new design of the website allows applicants to efficiently identify and locate information thereby substantially reducing the volume of calls and email inquiries.

The ability of the College to serve applicants in both official languages ensures that all applicants receive equitable service.

### h.  Review or appeal processes

i)      Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
No changes this year

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
No changes this year

### i.  Access to applicants' records

i)      Describe any improvement/changes implemented in the last year
No changes this year

ii)     Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
No changes this year

**j.** Training and resources for registration staff, Council, and committee members

i)    Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

All members of the College's Board of Directors (Council), Committee members, and staff participate in numerous training and networking opportunities on an annual basis. Below is a list of the training opportunities provided for staff, board members and committee members in 2020:

- The Board of Directors and Committee members partook in policy governance and best practices training provided by Karen Friday-Field of Meridian Edge Consulting.
- The Board of Directors and Committee members completed training on fiduciary duties and conflict of interest provided by the College's General Counsel, Amy Stein.
- The Board of Directors, Committee members and College staff completed a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training program provided by Dr. Nafeesa Jalal of N. Jalal Global Consulting.
- Committee Chairs and College staff underwent meeting facilitation training provided by Facilitation First.

Additionally, the annual orientation for Registration Committee members was enhanced to include modules on applying the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act and unconscious bias. In total, therefore, Registration Committee underwent training in the following areas in 2020:

- Legislation related to registration and the registration appeals process
- Fair registration principles and practices
- By-laws, policies and processes of the College
- Labour mobility
- Conflicts of interest/bias
- Cultural differences and accessibility
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process
- Applying Fair-Access Law module
- Applying Fair Access Law in Scenarios module
- Unconscious Bias online workshop

ii)   Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants

By offering standardized training, the College safeguards objective and impartial decision-making and sustains its focus on providing transparent and fair registration practices for applicants, within the context of its mandate to protect

the public interest and commitment to continued improvement of policies and procedures.

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization

The Board approved an updated set of Organizational Values in December of 2020 that reflect its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. This decision came as a direct result of the comprehensive training program engaged in by staff, Board and Committee members. Engaging in continuous learning and training ensures that the College remains current with regulatory trends and developments. It also allows Board members, Committee members and staff to better understand the current issues that may impact applicants' experience during the registration process and communicate with applicants more sensitively.

**k.** Mutual recognition agreements

i)    Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
No changes this year

ii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
No changes this year

**l.** Other - Describing any improvements/changes implemented in the last year

i)    Describe any improvements/changes implemented in the last year
No changes this year

ii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on applicants
No changes this year

iii)    Describe the impact of the improvements/changes on your organization
No changes this year

**m.** Describe any registration-related improvements/changes to your enabling legislation and/or regulations in the last year
No changes this year

Provide any additional information:

## Quantitative Information

The following quantitative information is collected for the purpose of observing statistical changes and trends related to application, licensure, appeals and staffing year over year.

a. Languages

Indicate the languages in which application materials and information about the application process are available.

| Language | Yes/No |
|----------|--------|
| English | Yes |
| French | Yes |

Other (please specify):

**b.** Gender applications

Indicate the number of applicants in each category as applicable

| Gender | Number of applicants |
|--------|---------------------|
| Male | 31 |
| Female | 86 |
| None of the above | 0 |

Additional comments:

c. Gender of members

Indicate the number of members in each category as applicable. Select the option that best corresponds to the terminology used by your organization.

| Gender | Number of members |
|--------|-------------------|
| Male | 1,395 |
| Female | 1,857 |
| None of the above | 0 |

Additional Comments:

> For the following sections d,e & f, the OFC recognizes that the term initial education infers that applicants may receive their education in multiple jurisdictions.

> For the purpose of these questions, include only the jurisdiction in which an entry-level degree, diploma or other certification required to practice the profession or trade was obtained.

d. Jurisdiction where applicants obtained their initial education

Indicate the number of applicants by the jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade

| Ontario | Other Canadian Provinces | USA | Other International (list countries and # of applicants) | Unknown | Total |
|---------|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| 81 | 32 | 0 | France - 1<br>India – 2<br>Vietnam – 1<br>Total - 4 | 0 | 117 |

Additional comments:

e. Jurisdiction where applicants who became registered members obtained their initial education

Indicate the number of applicants who became registered members in the reporting year by the jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade.

| Ontario | Other Canadian Provinces | USA | Other International (list countries and # of applicants) | Unknown | Total |
|---------|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| 78 | 32 | 0 | France - 1<br>India – 2<br>Vietnam – 1<br>Total - 4 | 0 | 114 |

Additional comments:

f. Jurisdiction where members were initially trained

Indicate the total number of registered members by jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education in the profession or trade.

| Ontario | Other Canadian Provinces | USA | Other International (list countries and # of applicants) | Unknown | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2,697 | 348 | 6 | Austria – 1<br>China - 2<br>France – 2<br>Germany – 1<br>Hong Kong - 3<br>India – 13<br>Israel - 1<br>Iran -5<br>Iraq – 1<br>Philippines – 4<br>South Africa - 1<br>Sweden – 1<br>Tunisia - 1<br>UK - 2<br>Vietnam – 1<br>Total - 39 | 0 | 3,090 |

g. Applications processed

Indicate the number of applications your organization processed in the reporting year. Enter the data by jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession, i.e. before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario.

| January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 | Ontario | Other Canadian Provinces | USA | Other International | Unknown | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New applications received | 81 | 32 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 117 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applicant actively pursuing licensing. Those who had some contact with your organization in the reporting year | 81 | 32 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 117 |
| Inactive applicants. Those who had no contact with your organization in the reporting year. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Applicants who became fully registered members | 78 | 32 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 114 |
| Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative licence but were not issued a licence | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence* | 71 | 45 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 122 |

- An alternative class of licence enables it holder to practice with limitations, but additional requirements must be met in order for the member to be fully licensed.

Additional comments:
An alternative class of licence refers to student and intern opticians.

h. Classes of certificate/licence

Provide a description of the classes of certificate/license offered by your organization. You should have at least one class listed.

| # | Certification | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. 4 | Registered Student Optician | Students enrolled in an opticianry program approved by the MTCU, or |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | applicants who have applied to become registered as an optician or an 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. The class of student optician is an optional class of registration. |
| 2. 158 | 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 successfully completed additional training ordered by the Registration Committee. Intern opticians are eligible to sit the national opticianry examinations. |
| 3. 3,090 | Registered Optician | Full, independent licensure. A Registered Optician is authorized to perform the controlled act of dispensing eyeglasses, contact lenses and/or subnormal vision devices. The holder of the license may use the protected |

| | | title of "Registered Optician" (RO). |
|---|---|---|

Additional comments:

### i. Reviews and appeals processed

State the number of reviews and appeals your organization processed in the reporting year. Enter the data by jurisdiction where applicants were initially trained in the profession, i.e. <u>before</u> they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario.

| January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 | Ontario | Other Canadian Provinces | USA | Other International | Unknown | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applicants that were subject to an internal review or that were referred to a statutory committee of your governing council, such as Registration Committee | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Applicants who initiated an appeal of a registration decision | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Appeals heard | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Registration decisions changed following an appeal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Additional comments:

### j. Paid Staff

Provide the number of paid staff employed by your organization in the categories shown, as of December 31, 2020.

You may use decimals if you need to count half units. For example, on full-time employee plus one part-time employee will be equivalent to 1.5 employees.

| Category | Number of staff |
|---|---|
| Total number of staff employed by the regulatory body | 15 |
| Number of staff involved in the appeals process | 2 |
| Number of staff involved in the registration process | 3 |

Additional comments:
Two part-time staff

## Submission

**Name of individual with authority to sign on behalf of the organization:**
**Amy Stein**
**Title: Deputy Registrar (Acting) and General Counsel**
**Date: April 29, 2021**