

# Fair Registration Practices Report

## Opticians (2017)

The answers seen below were submitted to the OFC by the regulated professions.

This Fair Registration Practices Report was produced as required by:

- the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act (FARPACTA) s. 20 and 23(1), for regulated professions named in Schedule 1 of FARPACTA
- 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.

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## 1. Qualitative Information

### a) Requirements for registration, including acceptable alternatives

#### i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.

In 2017, the College migrated to a new online database system which stores all applicant and member information electronically. As a result, the College's annual renewal process was conducted fully online in 2017. The new system will allow the College to update its public register in 2018 to provide the necessary transparency to the public and our members.

#### ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.

The College's new online database system serves to simplify the renewal process, and ensures timely response times to members. Applicants receive notification of registration status immediately upon staff updating it in the system. In 2018, the College will continue to expand its online database system to include processing of applications.

#### iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.

The College's new online database system supports the College's strategic initiative to implement a paper-less registration system. Sending communication electronically allows the College to track its interactions with applicants and members in our database, and assists in maintaining consistent communication.

### b) Assessment of qualifications

#### i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.

In accordance with the College's Registration Regulation, all applicants who have not graduated from an accredited education program must satisfy the College's Registration Committee that they have a level of knowledge and skill that is equivalent to that acquired by graduates of an accredited education program. Thus, all applicants from a non-accredited education program (Canadian or international) are asked to complete the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process. The PLAR process assesses the applicant's current level of knowledge and skill in opticianry, and assists the Registration Committee in determining if there are any gaps in the applicant's prior

learning and experience to address prior to registration as an optician. The PLAR process includes completion of a Competency Gap Analysis (CGA), which is an online tool designed to assess the applicant's prior learning outcomes against the national competencies, and an in-person case-based interview which assesses an applicant's practical knowledge.

In 2015, the College began revising the tools for the PLAR process. With the assistance of the National Association of Canadian Opticianry Regulators (NACOR) and a psychometric consultant, the College worked to develop a scorecard designed to assist the Registration Committee in understanding the relative weight of CGA and in-person interview scores and how these assessment components should be taken together and interpreted for the purpose of the Committee assigning any necessary educational bridging programs. In addition, the College also worked to develop standardized scenarios for the interview portion of the PLAR process in order to increase objectivity and consistency of PLAR assessments from candidate to candidate as well as jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

In 2017, the College completed work on the last phase of the project which involved developing, pilot testing and validating a second test CGA form to increase the bank of questions. Pilot testing of the questions took place in January 2017 and validation by the National Exams Committee (NEC) occurred in February 2017. The project was completed in March 2017 with the two test forms being uploaded to a secure section of the NACOR website to facilitate use by each provincial regulator. PLAR candidates are now randomly provided one of the two test forms.

In August, 2017, the college submitted a funding application to the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to support a PLAR practicum simulation project. The College's submitted proposal was approved for funding in November 2017 and work on the project will commence in March, 2018. The project will develop two practicum simulation bridging courses with competencies aligned to the national competencies using gamification (using game-design and game principles) to provide non-accredited education applicants to develop the practical skills and experience needed to bridge any competency gaps identified by the Registration Committee. The courses will decrease the need for practicum placements and supervisors and decrease the cost of enrolling in bridging education. Gamification is an engaging method for non-accredited applicants to learn about practical competencies in a Canadian context.

## **ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

The College's continuous work to revise existing and develop new PLAR tools has bolstered the objectivity, consistency and availability of PLAR assessments across the country. The changes to existing PLAR tools have provided applicants with a clearer understanding of each phase of the assessment process and it is anticipated that the development of the two practicum simulation courses will increase an applicant requiring practical skills and experience to receive this training through a low-cost and engaging method.

## **iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.**

The College's continuous work to revise existing and develop new PLAR tools continues to reinforce in the organization the importance and validity of the measurement of competencies over credentials.

## **c) Provision of timely decisions, responses, and reasons**

### **i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.**

In 2017, the College continued to comply with a customer service standard initiative for response times. Response times of two business days are included on staff email auto-replies and on voicemails. Contact information for alternative staff members are also listed. During busy times, such as during annual renewal, response times are adjusted and communicated accordingly.

### **ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

Publishing our response times on voicemails and auto-replies allows applicants to better understand the

expectations for response times.

**iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.**

Communicating and delivering on our published response times aims to build an accountable relationship with our members.

**d) Fees**

**i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.**

Annual registration fees continue to be subject to a small increase until 2021 as set out in the College's by-laws and approved by Council in 2015. Annual registration fee increases continue to be published in a fee schedule in section 5.2 of the College's by-laws, available on our website here: <http://www.coptont.org/docs/Legislation/COO-By-laws.pdf>.

In 2017, the annual registration fee for registered opticians increased from \$877 (plus HST) in 2016 to \$899 (plus HST). In 2017, the annual registration fee for student and intern opticians increased from \$129 (plus HST) to \$132 (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 members to anticipate and prepare for fee increases.

**iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.**

No changes this year

**e) Timelines**

**i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.**

The College endeavours to process all applications in a timely manner. Pursuant to the College's Registration Timelines policy, approximate timelines are provided to all applicants. The College continues to review registration processes and formally record current strategies to reduce timelines for applicants by updating our Registration Timelines policy periodically. In 2017, the College worked to reduce the amount of time required for applicants from non-accredited education programs to complete the PLAR process. Previously, in-person interviews were scheduled at the beginning of every year to occur only three times throughout the year. In 2017, the College began scheduling interviews on an as-needed basis in order to greatly reduce the applicant's total application timeline. As a result, the Registration Timelines Policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly by the Registration Committee at an upcoming meeting in 2018.

As noted above, in 2017 the College continued to transition to a paperless registration system and communicated with all applicants and members electronically. By receiving communications and registration documentation by email, applicants are provided with the information that they need about the registration process and notified of the status of their applications in a more consistent and timely manner.

**ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

Registration timelines have an immediate impact on applicants. Continuously reviewing registration timelines and seeking ways to improve them in a realistic manner improves our relationship with applicants and members.

### iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.

Continuously reviewing registration processes enforces a commitment to service to our membership.

## f) Policies, procedures and/or processes, including by-laws

### i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.

#### 1. Contact Lens Fitting Policy

It is a registration requirement that applicants complete a number of contact lens fits prior to registration as a registered optician. Following consultation with accredited educator stakeholders, the Registration Committee approved a policy at its December 13, 2016 meeting to clarify how contact lens fittings are completed by students as they work towards the requirements of becoming registered as opticians with the College of Opticians. At its meeting on January 30, 2017, Council approved the Contact Lens Fitting Policy, which came into effect on September 1, 2017 in order to align with the educational school year. The College worked to notify all educational institutions and students of the new policy prior to the implementation date by sending an explanatory article to educational institutions and providing an opportunity for educational institutions and students to contact the College for clarification. The policy outlines what an acceptable contact lens fitting entails, and allows students to conduct contact lens practice fits on peers/standardized patients in a school or dispensary setting, in addition to actual patients in the dispensary. Under the new policy, a contact lens fit may be performed on "patients" that are either:

1. an actual patient in a dispensary setting; or
2. a peer in role-play not actually seeking opticianry care, who portrays the personal/medical history, physical symptoms, emotional characteristics and everyday concerns of an actual patient.

It is anticipated that the contact lens fitting policy will allow students and interns with expanded opportunities to obtain the required practice skills and experience while maintaining public protection.

#### 2. Contact Lens Mentor Policy

The College's Contact Lens Mentor policy sets out the criteria for acceptable supervisors for student and intern contact lens fits. The policy requires that Registered Opticians who wish to supervise contact lens fits register with the College as mentors and verify that they have completed a specific number of hard or soft contact lens fits within a three year period. In 2017, Council approved the proposed amendments to the Contact Lens Mentor Policy to require any optician who wishes to supervise contact lens fits to declare their currency and register with the College as a Contact Lens Mentor in order to ensure that all contact lens mentors are current. The new policy came into effect September 1, 2017 to align with the educational school year. Also in 2017, the Registration Committee approved an amendment to the Contact Lens Mentor policy to remove the criterion in order to allow individuals who have experienced a break in their practice to be eligible for Contact Lens Mentor status. The Committee also approved an addition to the policy to include a statement regarding accommodation requests. The revised policy came into effect on October 2, 2017.

#### 3. Life-Member By-Law

In 2017, the Registration Committee considered the College's Life-Member by-law criteria. The Committee considered whether life members should be able to:

1. resign from the College and become life members and/or remain life members; and
2. cease to pay their annual membership fees without facing suspension.

Upon consideration of the above, the Committee approved to submit to Council several by-law recommendations and a draft policy setting out Council Criteria for life membership. At its meeting on October 2, 2017, Council approved the Registration Committee's proposed changes to the by-laws and the proposed Life Members Policy to circulate for feedback. Feedback will be presented to Council in 2018 for further consideration.

#### 4. The Register By-Law

Effective January 1, 2017, the College's by-laws regarding the public register were updated to improve transparency of registration and information arising from the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee for the public. The following sections were added to the College's by-laws under section 15.6:

(xxv) Allows outstanding criminal charges relevant to a member's suitability to practice to be posted on the register (commenced on or after January 1, 2017). Any postings will be removed if the member is acquitted or charge is withdrawn or superseded.

(xxvi) Allows posting on the register if a member is licensed in a profession inside or outside Ontario.

(xxvii) Requires that any oral caution by the ICRC made on or before January 1, 2017, be posted on the register.

(xxviii) Requires that any specified continuing education or remediation program (SCERP) ordered by the ICRC on or before January 1, 2017, be posted on the Register. A notation that the SCERP has been completed will also be posted.

(xxix) Sets out the process for deleting a notation about an oral caution or a SCERP if the oral caution or SCERP is overturned on appeal. If varied on appeal, the notation will be replaced with a summary of the process up to the appeal.

(xxx) Sets out the process for deleting a notation about an oral caution or a SCERP upon written request by the member. These notations will not be removed unless the member makes a written request. Such a request cannot be made until 2 years after the ICRC decision.

(xxxi) Allows undertakings made by the ICRC relating to a complaint against a member on or after January 1, 2017, to be posted on the register.

## **ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

Updates to the College's policies and by-laws are intended to reduce member and applicant confusion and enforce consistency in College decision-making.

## **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 clarifications reduce member and applicant inquiries and assist staff in addressing inquiries 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.

## **g) Resources for applicants**

### **i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.**

In 2017, the College continued to work with its counterparts throughout the country in developing additional options for assisting Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) applicants to better understand the PLAR process. Currently, the College of Opticians of Alberta are developing seven videos aimed at assisting internationally trained opticians understanding the PLAR process and the concept of self-regulation in Canada. One such video will be geared towards the PLAR in-person interview, and will demonstrate how the interview is administered and will offer some suggestions to candidates on how to prepare for the interview. All videos will be posted on the "Become an Optician" website that is currently under development by the College of Opticians of BC. The website will also host mini-Competency Gap Analysis written tests which will function as a self-assessment to allow international applicants to evaluate whether they could proceed with the PLAR process. It is anticipated that each province will have access to the operational website in 2018.

**ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

Providing explanatory resources to PLAR applicants provides these applicants with a clearer understanding of each phase of the assessment process. Greater inter-provincial collaboration has meant that assessment and decision making is conducted in a similar manner across Canada, regardless of where an applicant chooses to complete the PLAR process. With more information on what to expect and how to prepare for the PLAR process, applicants are able to better prepare for the assessment.

**iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.**

Providing explanatory resources to PLAR applicants reduces general applicant inquiries and allows the College to create more targeted and detailed responses to PLAR applicants.

**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 applicant records**

**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

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

**i. Describe any improvements / changes implemented in the last year.**

In 2017, the College continued to provide annual training to Council and Committee members on the Regulations, by-laws, policies and processes of the College. A number of training initiatives for registration staff, Council and Committee members was also conducted:

1. Council underwent a comprehensive two-day training session.
2. New public members of Council attended continuing education at trade shows to observe and understand the profession and to interact with the membership.

The COO provides its staff, council and committee members with standardized training to safeguard objective and impartial decision-making in the registration process. Training and orientation for Registration Committee and Registration Appeal Panel (RAP) members includes information on the regulator's registration regulation and policies, and their duties and obligations under fair-access legislation for the health professions. Additional training for staff and committee members focuses on cultural differences and accessibility. The COO also engages its staff and committee members in ongoing informal training opportunities, such as regular staff meetings to discuss common issues and promote consistency in their decision-making.

**ii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on applicants.**

Standardized training for staff, Council and Committee members leads to more consistent decision making. Specifically, the College is able to ensure that registration assessment processes are objective and consistent from candidate to candidate which ensures fairer outcomes.

Council and Committee engagement in ongoing training may lead to more informed and thoughtful decision making.

**iii. Describe the impact of the improvements / changes on your organization.**

The College recognizes the importance of addressing strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement for all staff, Council and Committee members. Continuously updating training and resource material ensures staff, Council and Committee members are well informed and the College is committed to updating training material and reviewing resources regularly.

**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 (include as many items as applicable)**

**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

**Describe any registration-related improvements/changes to your enabling legislation and/or regulations in the last year**

The College's Registration Regulation sets out all requirements for obtaining and maintaining a certificate of registration for all classes of licensure with the College. In 2017, the Registration Committee completed its work on a comprehensive review and revision of the College's Registration Regulation and Council approved the final draft regulation at its meeting on January 30, 2017. The College submitted its proposed amendments to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in June, 2017. Some of the highlights of the new regulation include:

- Introduction of a new inactive class of certificate of registration intended for existing registered opticians who do not intend to practise the profession (either temporarily or long-term);
- Elimination of the registered student class of certificate. Pursuant to Section 29(1)(b) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*, students are able to practise under supervision. Removing student registration would bring the COO in line with most other health profession regulators in Ontario;
- Changes to registration requirements (some of which include provisions relating to applicants also registered with another regulatory body and a provision to deal with applicants who make false or misleading statements on their applications); and,
- A new currency requirement for registered optician members and applicants to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge, skills and/or judgment in the profession.

A complete summary of the changes is available on the College's website: <http://coptont.org/docs/Legislation/Proposed-Reg-Reg-App-Jan2017.pdf>.

A summary which includes a side by side comparison between the proposed changes, the current regulation and the rationale for any changes can also be found on the website: <http://coptont.org/docs/Legislation/Registration-Reg-Chart-Changes-Tracked-Jan2017.pdf>.

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## 2. Quantitative Information

### a) Languages

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

Language	Yes/No
English	Yes
French	Yes

Other (please specify)

Additional comments:

### b) Gender of applicants

Indicate the number of applicants in each category as applicable.

Gender	Number of Applicants
Male	106
Female	211
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	1298
Female	1655
None of the above	0

**Additional comments:**

Registered Optician members as of December 31, 2017

**d) Jurisdiction where applicants obtained their initial education**

Indicate the number of applicants by the jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education<sup>1</sup> in the profession or trade.

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
254	57	0	India 2 Iran 3 China 1 Total 6	0	317

<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that applicants may receive their education in multiple jurisdictions, for the purpose of this question, include only the jurisdiction in which an entry-level degree, diploma or other certification required to practice the profession or trade was obtained.

**Additional comments:**

The above numbers exlcudes individuals who already held a certificate of registration as a student optician with the College and were automatically updated to an intern optician certificate by the College.

**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<sup>1</sup> in the profession or trade.

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
237	49	0	India 2 Iran 3 China 1 Total 6	0	292

<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that applicants may receive their education in multiple jurisdictions, for the purpose of this question, include only the jurisdiction in which an entry-level degree, diploma or other certification required to practice the profession or trade was obtained.

**Additional comments:**

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**f) Jurisdiction where members were initially trained**

Indicate the total number of registered members by jurisdiction where they obtained their initial education<sup>1</sup> in the profession or trade.

Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
			Australia 1		
			China 6		
			Germany 1		
			India 12		
			Iraq 1		
			Iran 3		
2574	330	6	Israel 1	6	2953
			Philippines 6		
			Poland 1		
			Russia 1		
			Sweden 1		
			U.K. 3		
			Total 37		

<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that applicants may receive their education in multiple jurisdictions, for the purpose of this question, include only the jurisdiction in which an entry-level degree, diploma or other certification required to practice the profession or trade was obtained.

**Additional comments:**

Members as of December 31, 2017
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**g) Applications processed**

Indicate the number of applications your organization processed in 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)

from January 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup> of the reporting year	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
<b>New applications received</b>	246	68	0	3	0	<b>317</b>
<b>Applicants actively pursuing licensing (applicants who had some contact with your organization in the reporting year)</b>	246	68	0	3	0	<b>317</b>
<b>Inactive applicants (applicants who had no contact with your organization in the reporting year)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members</b>	1	1	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Applicants who became FULLY registered members</b>	104	46	0	0	0	<b>150</b>
<b>Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence<sup>3</sup> but were not issued a licence</b>	2	6	0	0	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence<sup>3</sup></b>	139	15	0	0	0	<b>154</b>

from January 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup> of the reporting year	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	Unknown	Total
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<sup>1</sup> An alternative class of licence enables its holder to practice with limitations, but additional requirements must be met in order for the member to be fully licensed.

**Additional comments:**

**h) Classes of certificate/license**

Indicate and provide a description of the classes of certificate/license offered by your organization.

You must specify and describe at least one class of certificate/license (on line a) in order for this step to be complete.

#	Certification	Description
a)	Registered Student Optician	<p align="center"><b>Description (a)</b></p> <p>Students enrolled in an opticianry program approved by the 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. As noted, the class of student optician is considered to be an optional class of registration.</p>
b)	Registered Intern Optician	<p align="center"><b>Description (b)</b></p> <p>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.</p>
c)	Registered Optician	<p align="center"><b>Description (c)</b></p> <p>Full, independent licensures. 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 can use the protected title of</p>

"Registered Optician" (RO).

**Additional comments:**

**i) Reviews and appeals processed**

State the number of reviews and appeals 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 1 <sup>st</sup> to December 31 <sup>st</sup> of the reporting year	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	7	6	0	3	0	16
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**

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, one full-time employee and one 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	12
Staff involved in appeals process	2
Staff involved in registration process	5

**Additional comments:**

### 3. Submission

**I hereby certify that:**

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

Beverley Sloan

**Title:**

Deputy Registrar

**Date:**

2018/03/01