

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Fazal Khan, Registrar

DATE: June 3-4, 2024

SUBJECT: Spring NACOR Report

For Decision

For Information

Monitoring Report

Purpose:

This report will provide highlights from the Spring National meetings held May 1, 2024, in Halifax, NS.

Background:

The National Alliance of Canadian Opticianry Regulators (NACOR) facilitates bi-annual gatherings of all provincial opticianry regulators. Each province send at least one voting member and often other support staff and board observers. Each province provides provincial updates including statistics regarding membership. The national meetings provide an opportunity to network and collaborate on issues of national interest. This collaboration has resulted in creating consistency in several key areas such as registration tools and registration practices which helps reduce jurisdictional differences between provinces.

Highlights:

NACOR Restructuring:

With changes to regulatory models being discussed and in some provinces such as BC, undergoing amalgamation, NACOR has had to reconsider its governance structure as it approaches the future. Historically, each regulator has sent a voting member to attend the national meetings. With amalgamation and the ceasing of a specific opticianry regulatory body for BC, it is now in question whether an optician specific representative will be sent to these meetings moving forward. Along with these changes, in order to provide further separation and maintaining an arms-length relationship between the provinces and NACOR, changes to the decision making structure were discussed including the creation of an Executive/Management Committee.

Aside from the Management Committee, it was proposed that NACOR would receive input from each of the provinces via sub-committees or working groups. This would include the continuation of the National Exams Committee (NEC) and the creation of other groups such as the Registrar's Committee/Administrators Working Group, Public

Awareness , Competenices, PLAR and other ad hoc working groups as necessary. This would ensure that provincial input is received on important topics.

The NACOR admin team will return in the fall after taking the input received to its legal team to align the goverance structuring requests with the legal obligations of its not-for-profit organizational structure.

Budgeting:

NACOR presented projected budgets for 2024 reflecting its move towards becoming a service provider for provincial regulators. A large part of this move is to fully administer the national examination provincially. While BC has had it's entry to practice examination fully administered by NACOR for several years, other regulators such as Ontario have had NACOR take on all aspects of the administration of the provincial examination as of this year. The 2024 budget is forecasting a significant deficit and discussion was had regarding ways to resolve this. While fees from revnenue sources such as seat fees were discussed, ultimately it was recognized that the main driver of costs was exams related and that NACOR will need to revisit the fee to candidates for the examination in order to cover the administrative costs.

Exams Scoring:

The National Exams Committee (NEC) met this past January to review and revise the national examination. Part of this process includes collecting and analyzing results data to assist with creating a new 'pass mark'. Wicket Measurements, which provides exams review services from a perspective of integrity and rigor using psychometric principles, presented to the national group regarding a shift in how exams scores are reported to the candidates.

In line with other large national assessments such as the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) and the OAT (Optometry Admission Test), Dr. Wickett was suggesting a move from Raw Score reporting to Scaled Score reporting. Currently the raw score format provides the candidate with their score as a percentage out of 100. The NEC sets the pass mark as such. This presents a challenge as the 'pass mark' will fluctuate from time to time as the NEC revisits the national examination content and set a new pass score.

Under scaled scoring, all candidates must earn the same minimum scaled score to pass the exam. This eliminates confusion for candidates who were administered different test forms with different raw cut scores.

After a robust discussion, the move to Scaled Score reporting was agreed upon and will likely roll out in Q2 of 2025.

Alignment with Ontario Legislation regarding number of exam attempts:

With the launch of the new Ontario Registration Regulation on July 1, 2024, exam candidates will be required to repeat an education program after four unsuccessful attempts at the limited to pass the national examination. While most provinces require candidates who are unsuccessful after 3 attempts to complete an upgrading program, limiting the maximum number of attempts is specific to Ontario. NACOR made a presentation to the group to facilitate a discussion around all provinces moving towards the same model to create national consistency. Data was shared from 2013-2033. Of the 4162 Eyeglass exams sections administered in this time, only 8 candidates required a 4th attempt (3 from Ontario) and 5 of those 8 were successful on the 4th attempt.

With respect to contact lenses, 3570 sections were administered over the same time period with 20 of those candidates requiring a 4th attempt and 17 passing after that session.

In effect, there is a minimal number of candidates that find themselves not passing after 4 attempts however, it was recommended that other provinces seek their own legal advice prior to committing to aligning with Ontario's move to a maximum of 4 attempts.

BC Amalgamation:

BC presented an update regarding the move to an amalgamated model by June of 2024. It was indicated to them that the amalgamated group would continue to send a representative to the national meetings and continue to participate in funding seat fees.

Next meetings:

NACOR will likely hold its next meeting on October 7th, inline with the CNAR regulatory conference in Ottawa. Likely, there will be another Industry Round Table event which will be held separately in Montreal in the fall.

Public Interest Considerations:

Participation in NACOR has resulted in a nationally administered examination and entry to practice competencies, resulting in uniform education and testing of opticians across Canada and ultimately, a consistent experience for patients regardless of which province they seek care in.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations:

Participation in NACOR has created accessibility tools such as the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) tool as well as the Pre-Arrival Readiness Tool (PART) which assist those with prior learning or existing training/qualifications to gain access to alternate provincial registration pathways.

Risk Management:

Third party administration of the examination creates a level of independence and integrity to the process as well as creating consistency at a national level. Using NACOR to develop the national competencies which serves as the basis of the national examination and then have that examination undergo regular psychometric review, provides rigor and defensibility to the entry to practice examination.

Recommendations/Action Required:

This report is for informational purposes and requires no action.