

Briefing Note

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Registration Committee

DATE: June 3, 2024

SUBJECT: 10.3 National Examinations Policy
APPENDIX A: Draft National Examinations Policy

☒ For Decision

☐ For Discussion

☐ Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To approve the proposed National Examinations Policy.

Background:

As of January 2024, the College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) divested itself of the administrative functions related to the administration of national examinations to the National Alliance of Optician Regulators (NACOR). It was agreed that the College would remain involved in developing and refining the national examinations through the participation of the provincial National Examinations Committee (NEC) representative and the oversight of examination sessions through the provincial observer.

The College entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with NACOR to address requirements such as the training and qualification of examiners, accessibility issues, such as examination venue location, and factors that address diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For Consideration:

The Registration Committee is proposing a policy that sets out the COO's criteria for eligibility for the following positions related to the administration of the national examinations for opticians by NACOR:

1. **National Examination Committee (NEC) Representative:** The NEC representative is an individual who represents the COO at the NEC meetings. The NEC representative is responsible for attending the meetings, making decisions related to examination policy and content, and reporting on examination policy and content to the Board of Directors (Board). The NEC representative is accountable to the Board.
2. **Examination Observer:** The examination observer (formerly the Chief Examiner) is an individual who represents the COO at NACOR examination sessions. The examination observer is responsible for attending and monitoring the examinations, ensuring that the

examinations are administered in a manner consistent with the COO's obligations under applicable legislation, regulations and policies, or requirements identified by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC), and acting as a liaison between the COO and NACOR between examination sessions regarding any concerns about the examinations.

3. **Examiner:** The examiner is a registered optician who met the eligibility and qualifications criteria for becoming an examiner for the National Examinations set out by the COO and NACOR.

A draft of the proposed National Examinations Policy is attached as **Appendix A**.

Public Interest Considerations

It is paramount that the public has trust in the licensing process for registered opticians. The NACOR examination is developed with subject matter experts and is subjected to rigorous psychometric scrutiny. The exam is administered uniformly across Canada (except Quebec) and is regularly reviewed by the National Examinations Committee. Establishing and adhering to robust criteria for the COO representatives involved in the national examinations and examiners would further enhance the integrity and defensibility of the examination.

The COO bears ultimate responsibility for the administration of the national examinations in Ontario and for ensuring that the examinations adhere to the COO's public protection mandate. With the divestment of the examinations to a third party, it is important that the COO articulates clear standards for examination administration in the public interest.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations

The College is committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles concerning the development and delivery of the national examinations. The mission of the individuals selected to represent Ontario at NEC meetings and national examinations is to exercise and promote fairness, integrity, and inclusion in admission to the profession of opticianry.

Risk Management Considerations

Establishing a National Examinations Policy ensures that the Board maintains oversight over the administration process being carried out by the third party.

Recommendation/Action Required:

That the Board approve the proposed National Examinations Policy.

REGISTRATION POLICY

National Examinations

The following policy sets out the College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) criteria for eligibility for the following positions related to the administration of the National Examinations for opticians by the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR):

1. National Examination Committee Representative
2. Examination Observer
3. Examiner

Additional qualifications or responsibilities for these positions may be set out in the NACOR Policy and Procedure Manual (NACOR Manual). In the event of any inconsistency between the NACOR Manual and this policy, this policy shall prevail.

National Examination Committee Representative

The National Examination Committee (NEC) is a working group established by NACOR to deal with examination policy and content.

Each year, the COO will select an individual to represent Ontario at NEC meetings (NEC Representative).

1. The NEC Representative's responsibilities include:
 - a. Attending and representing the COO at NEC meetings. Meetings may be in person or virtual, and business may also be conducted via email or teleconference.
 - b. Making decisions related to examination policy and content, where directed to do so by the Board of Directors.
 - c. Reporting out to the Board of Directors on examination policy and content on an as-needed basis.
2. The NEC Representative shall be elected by the Board of Directors on an annual basis, and must meet the following criteria/qualifications:
 - a. Registered Optician in good standing with the COO.
 - b. Prior experience with the NACOR examinations (such as previous experience as an examiner) and an appropriate amount of subject matter expertise relating to the work the NEC expects to carry out during the upcoming calendar year.
 - c. Familiarity with the entry-to-practice competencies for opticians.
 - d. The NEC Representative may include:
 - i. Current and/or former Board members

- ii. Current and/or former Appointed Committee Members
 - iii. A non-board/committee member
- 3. The NEC Representative is accountable to the Board of Directors. In carrying out their duties, the NEC Representative shall:
 - a. Ensure their actions, including votes cast on any decision being made by the NEC, are in line with the COO's statutory mandate to regulate the profession of opticianry in the public interest.
 - b. Act only within the scope of their own knowledge and expertise. Where a need has been identified for additional resources or subject matter expertise, the NEC Representative shall make a request to the Registrar to approve additional resources, including, where appropriate, an additional representative with subject matter expertise in the required area.

Examination Observer

The Examination Observer serves as the COO's administrative representative at NACOR examination sessions.

- 1. The Examination Observer's responsibilities include:
 - a. Attending all NACOR examination sessions.
 - b. Monitoring the examination sessions to ensure they are administered in a manner that is consistent with the COO's obligations under any applicable legislation, regulations, policies and/or requirements identified by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.
 - c. Taking steps prior to examination sessions to ensure they are carried out in a manner that is fair, accessible and that minimizes disruptions to candidates.
 - d. Acting as a liaison between the COO and NACOR between examination sessions with respect to any concerns about how the examinations are being conducted.
- 2. The Examination Observer has no authority to determine examination policy and content; that responsibility lies with the Board of Directors, including via the NEC Representative.
- 3. The Examination Observer:
 - a. Will be selected by the Registrar and may be a member of staff.
 - b. Shall have knowledge of and/or experience with the NACOR examinations and be able to identify concerns or omissions relating to how the examinations are conducted.

Examiner Eligibility Criteria

Registered opticians may apply to become an examiner for the National Examinations, and must meet the eligibility/qualifications criteria set out below.

1. The examiner must:
 - a. Be a currently registered optician and in good standing with their provincial regulatory board.
 - b. Be registered as an optician for a minimum of three years.
 - c. Be current and fluent in the subject they are examining.
2. The examiner must not:
 - a. have been teaching full or part-time in an opticianry program within one year preceding the date of the examination. This does not include acting as a practicum or co-op supervisor.
 - b. Be a current member of the COO's board of director or be currently appointed to a COO committee.
 - c. have been found to have committed an act of professional misconduct by a body that governs a profession inside or outside Ontario.
 - d. must not be subject to a term, condition, or limitation other than one prescribed by regulation.
3. An examiner's certificate of registration must not have been revoked preceding the date of the exam.
4. Examiners of the Optical Sciences 2 – Advanced Practice Contact Lens examination must be registered as Contact Lens Mentor with the COO. Out-of-province examiners must meet the qualifications of contact lens fitter in their province of registration.

Examiner responsibilities are set out in the NACOR Manual.