

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Derick Summers, Chair, Registration Committee

DATE: June 1, 2026

SUBJECT: Examination & Upgrading Policy
Appendix A: Examination & Upgrading Policy (Current & marked with changes version)
Appendix B: Examination & Upgrading Policy (Clean & proposed updated version)

☒ For Decision

☐ For Information

☐ Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To consider approval of proposed updates to the Examination & Upgrading Policy, following scheduled review by the Registration Committee.

Background:

The Registration Committee carries out a regular review of all public-facing policies to ensure they remain accurate, relevant, and aligned with the College's current processes. The following policy is being brought forward to the Board following a scheduled content review by the Committee

The Examination & Upgrading Policy was first approved on June 3, 2006, and was last revised on September 23, 2024.

The policy clarifies how candidates can become eligible to write the national examinations under the [Registration Regulation](#) and provides details about the upgrading measures candidates must engage in where required under the regulation.

For Consideration:

The current policy with visible tracked changes is attached as Appendix A and the proposed clean version of the policy is attached as Appendix B so that the Registration Committee can view what edits are being proposed.

Candidates with Expired Intern Status & No Examination Attempts

Under the Registration Regulation, all candidates who have failed a national examination three times, or who have reached the three-year expiration date of their Intern status are required to complete upgrading to be eligible for another exam attempt. The current policy has a clear path for candidates who have failed at least once. These candidates have to submit an upgrading proposal that focuses on their areas of exam weakness and then successfully complete it.

However, for candidates who have made no exam attempts during their three years as an Intern, there was not a clear path of defining what their upgrading should look like, as there were no clear areas of weakness to address. Currently, candidates have been asked to submit details of any additional opticianry-related education or work experience that they have engaged in since they first became eligible for the national examinations. The Committee has then been assigning upgrading based on the candidate's response. Updates have been proposed to the policy to create a more streamlined process.

The Registration Committee has proposed to amend the policy to have candidates who have never attempted the national examinations to complete the appropriate level of the Refresher Program, based on the amount of time passed since the candidate completed their opticianry program.

In addition to submitting proof of completion of the Refresher Program, the candidate would also be required do the following:

- Submit a written request to the College to be reissued a certificate of registration as an Intern Optician for the purpose of re-attempting the national examinations. The request should detail any additional opticianry-related education or work experience they may have completed since they first became eligible for the national examinations.
- Payment of the Registration Committee review fee.

The Refresher Program was approved by the Board on September 22, 2025 as a standard refreshment tool for out-of-practice or not-current applicants/registrants to ensure their skills are up to date. The Registration Committee considered that using the Refresher Program as the upgrading tool for candidates who are past the three-year mark would ensure that exam upgrading is consistently assigned and is fair to all candidates in this scenario. The Refresher Program is also an effective tool to ensure exam-readiness, accounting for how long it has been since the candidate has completed their opticianry program. The longer the period since the completion of the opticianry program, the more content the candidate would need to review.

Once the candidate has completed the upgrading requirements (written request, completion of the Refresher Program, payment of the committee fee), the Registration Committee will review the request. If the request is approved by the Committee, the Committee can then make an order to re-issue an Intern certificate of registration for the purpose of re-attempting the national examinations.

Other Proposed Changes

Other proposed changes by the Committee include updating the language to ensure clarity and consistency for candidates. One change in particular is around the supervision of contact lens fittings. The proposed change in wording for contact lens fittings now mirrors what is in the Practicum Policy.

The changes proposed are aimed at providing a more streamlined and clear process for candidates looking to make additional attempts on the national examinations.

Public Interest Considerations:

The Committee considered that the Examination & Upgrading Policy aims to ensure that all Registered Opticians have the relevant education and knowledge to meet the registration requirements to practice safely and competently. The Refresher Program has already undergone a thorough review process and has been approved as an appropriate tool to refresh the skills and knowledge of applicants or opticians after a period of inactivity to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge to practise safely and competently.

The use of the Refresher Program as a proposed upgrading tool is aimed at ensuring that all candidates have the appropriate knowledge to prepare for their exam.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations:

The Committee recognizes the importance of meeting the needs of candidates in varied personal situations. The proposed addition of the Refresher Program to the policy addresses a scenario (candidates who have made no examination attempts) that was not clearly addressed by the policy before. The addition of the Refresher Program has accessibility benefits: it can be completed on the candidate's own schedule and pace, all levels of the program are offered virtually, and the cost of the program has been minimized to cost-recovery levels to ensure financial accessibility.

The Examination & Upgrading Policy provides steps for candidates to upgrade their knowledge in a plan that tailors to their specific educational needs and schedule availability to qualify and register for the national examinations.

Risk Management Considerations:

The Committee considered that the proposed updates to the Examination & Upgrading Policy aim to ensure there is a consistent policy for candidates who have made no examination attempts. The proposed changes would eliminate any confusion that may have arisen from the previous policy.

Action Required:

That the Board approve the proposed updates to the Examination & Upgrading Policy or request a further review.



REGISTRATION POLICY
Examination and Upgrading

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Examination Requirement

It is a non-exemptible requirement under ~~Section 7(1)3 of Ontario Regulation 32/24~~,section 7(1)3 of Ontario Regulation 32/24, that an applicant for a certificate of registration as a Registered Optician must have,

“achieved a passing mark in each section of the College’s examinations, including examinations about contact lenses, or must have successfully completed examinations which are determined by the Registration Committee to be equivalent to the College’s examinations.”

The College of Opticians of Ontario (COO) recognizes the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators’ (NACOR) National Examinations as the entry-to-practice examinations. Individuals must complete both the contact lens and eyeglass examinations in order to qualify for a certificate of registration as a ~~registered optician~~Registered Optician in Ontario.

Examination Eligibility

The COO determines the eligibility of examination candidates in Ontario. Candidates are deemed to be eligible for the examination in the following circumstances:

1. **Accredited Education Candidates:** Candidates who complete their education at an opticianry program accredited by the College will be eligible for the examinations upon:
 - a. Successful completion and graduation from an accredited opticianry program;
 - b. Successful completion of the practicum/practical experience requirement; and
 - c. Successful registration with the COO as an Intern Optician.
2. **Unaccredited Education Candidates:** Candidates who complete their opticianry education at an unaccredited program, including education programs completed outside Canada, will be eligible for the examinations upon:
 - a. Successful completion of a prior learning assessment approved by the Registration Committee;
 - b. Successful completion of any additional training required by the Registration Committee; and
 - c. Successful registration with the COO as an Intern Optician.

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Examination and Upgrading Policy
Date Approved: May 24, 2006
Date Last Revised: September 23, 2024

3. **Candidates Seeking Registration in Other Provinces:** Candidates seeking registration in other provinces will be eligible for the examinations upon confirmation of eligibility by their home province. Examination results will be provided by NACOR to the home province.

Limits on Eligibility

Candidates are eligible to attempt the National Examinations 3 times within the 3-year period from the time they first become eligible. A candidate who fails the registration examinations a fourth time will be required to complete a fresh opticianry program before attempting the examinations again.

After 3 years and/or 3 unsuccessful attempts, The following steps must be taken by the candidate to extend their examination eligibility, as follows:

Candidates who have not attempted the National Examination

If you have never attempted the National Examinations, please complete the following steps:

1. Submit a **written request** to the College to be reissued a certificate of registration as an intern optician for the purpose of re-attempting the National Examinations. This request should be submitted to registration@collegeofopticians.ca-registration@collegeofopticians.ca. The following information must be included with the written request:
 - a. Details of any additional opticianry-related education or work experience that ~~the candidate~~you engaged in since ~~they~~you first became eligible for the examinations; (i.e. since you completed your program);
 - b. ~~Where a candidate~~Proof of completion of the College's Refresher Program. Please review the Refresher Program information carefully and complete the Refresher Level that corresponds to the amount of time that has failed an examination passed since you completed your opticianry program. If you're unsure which Refresher Level to complete, please contact the College.
 - c. Payment of the review fee.
2. The Registration Committee will review the candidate's request and issue a decision.

Candidates who have attempted the National Examinations one or more times, they

If you have attempted the National Examinations on at least one previous occasion (and were unsuccessful), please complete the following steps:

1. Submit a **written request** to the College to be reissued a certificate of registration as an intern optician for the purpose of re-attempting the National Examinations. This request should be submitted to registration@collegeofopticians.ca. The following information must also include
and be included with the written request:

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Examination and Upgrading Policy

Date Approved: May 24, 2006/December 4, 2023/

Date Last Revised: September 23, 2024

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a. Details of any additional opticianry-related education or work experience that you engaged in since you first became eligible for the examinations (i.e. since you completed your program);

b. An upgrading proposal, which outlines the steps the candidate proposes you propose to take to address any gaps in knowledge; and

c. Payment of the review fee.

2-3. The Registration Committee will review the candidate's request and issue a decision specifying the upgrading measures that the candidate must complete to extend their eligibility.

3-4. Complete the upgrading measures specified by the Registration Committee and submit proof of completion to the College. The upgrading requirements must be completed to the satisfaction of the Registration Committee.

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Upgrading Proposal Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to candidates who are required to submit an upgrading proposal in order to reattempt the National Examinations.

- Upgrading Proposal:** An upgrading proposal is a proposal that outlines the steps a candidate will undertake to improve their knowledge. The proposal should focus on areas of the examinations where the candidate was unsuccessful or performed poorly. Upgrading steps may include mentoring, tutoring and/or upgrading courses offered by an accredited educational institution. Candidates should identify the steps they propose to take in their proposal and explain how these steps will address gaps in their knowledge.
- Upgrading Mentors/Tutors:** If a candidate wishes to pursue a tutoring or mentoring arrangement, the upgrading proposal should be developed by a mentor/tutor selected by the candidate. An acceptable mentor would be a ~~registered optician~~ Registered Optician or an optometrist in good standing, with appropriate knowledge, skill, and judgement in the subject matter. All contact lens fittings must be supervised by a person authorized to dispense contact lenses in the jurisdiction where the dispensing takes place (e.g. optician, optometrist, ophthalmologist). Contact lens fittings that take place in Ontario must be supervised by an individual who has been approved as a Contact Lens Mentor under the College's Contact Lens Policy.
- Upgrading Hours:** Regardless of the type of proposal submitted, the Registration Committee usually ~~expects~~ expect the candidate to complete a minimum of 100 upgrading hours for each examination for which the candidate is seeking a supplemental attempt.
- Contents of Proposal:** A suitable upgrading proposal must demonstrate how the proposed mentoring/tutoring or upgrading courses relate to the examination areas where the candidate was previously unsuccessful or where they performed poorly. The proposal should be

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sufficiently detailed so that the Registration Committee can determine whether the upgrading will satisfactorily address the individual's areas of weakness.

Completion of Upgrading ~~/-Refresher~~

The candidate is responsible for submitting acceptable evidence of completion of the applicable refresher program or upgrading plan for the Registration Committee's consideration.

Satisfactory completion of the refresher program or approved upgrading plan will result in eligibility for one supplemental examination attempt only. For the purposes of writing the examination, the Registration Committee may extend a certificate of registration as an ~~intern~~Intern optician for a ~~period specified by the Registration Committee~~period of time.

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REGISTRATION POLICY

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 - c. Payment of the review fee.

3. The Registration Committee will review the candidate's request and issue a decision specifying the upgrading measures that the candidate must complete to extend their eligibility.
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