



COLLEGE *of* OPTICIANS  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
a B.C. Health Regulator

# QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE PROGRAM POLICY:

Policy for the [Continuing Competency Program](#) of the  
College of Opticians of British Columbia

Date recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee: January 12, 2021

Date approved by the Board of Directors: January 26, 2021

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This policy supports the idea that Licensed Opticians are autonomous healthcare professionals who are responsible and accountable for their own competent practice. These program requirements provide a framework for registrants to engage in continuous self-reflection; to identify any learning needs that will help them maintain or enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to ensure public safety.

## DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following are defined as:

**Committee (or QA Committee)** – the Quality Assurance Committee of the College of Opticians of BC (COBC).

**Non-Practicing Registrant** – A Licensed Optician who is not currently practicing opticianry, registered in any licensing category.

**Practicing Registrant** – A Licensed Optician who is currently practicing opticianry, registered in any licensing category, and is licensed to do so with the COBC in accordance with the Health Professions Act, Opticians Regulations, and College Bylaws.

**Registrant** – A Licensed Optician with the COBC, either practicing or non-practicing, registered in any licensing category.

**Reinstatement (or Reinstating)** – An application for registration submitted by a former registrant of COBC, whose certificate of registration has been suspended pursuant to the Bylaws.

**Upgrade (or Upgrading)** – An application by a registrant to upgrade their license from Dispensing Optician to include Contact Lens and/or Certification for Independent Automated Refracting.

## AUTHORITY

According to section 16(2)(e) of the Health Professions Act (HPA), COBC must “*establish and maintain a continuing competency program to promote high practice standards amongst registrants*”. The COBC’s Continuing Competency Program (CCP) is the Quality Assurance (QA) program that fulfills this legislative requirement and supports the COBC’s mandate to serve and protect the public.

## PURPOSE

All Licensed Opticians in British Columbia, practicing and non-practicing, in all licensing categories, are required to participate in and comply with the COBC's QA program requirements. The purpose of this policy is to outline the mandatory requirements of the QA program, and define the process the COBC will follow to address non-compliance.

## PROGRAM CYCLES

Each registrant is assigned a three-year continuing education cycle upon licensure, as defined below:

- Registrants who are **first time applicants** will be placed on the cycle that begins one year from the following January.
- Registrants who are **upgrading** their license will remain on their existing cycle.
- Registrants who are **reinstating** their license, or who **transfer from another jurisdiction** through labour mobility, will be placed on an appropriate cycle.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS & REQUIREMENTS

Registrants have three years to work through the following components of the COBC's QA program – the Continuing Competency Program (CCP). Each registrant is responsible for:

1. Taking the online continuing competency assessment.
2. Creating a minimum of six learning goals, with learning plans for each.
3. Participating in planned educational activities for each learning goal.
4. Reflecting on learning outcomes for each learning goal.

Each of the CCP components are detailed further in the CCP Information Guide, with additional materials for the program located on the COBC website.

Registrants are required to have all components of their CCP completed by December 31 in the final year of their three-year cycle. This includes:

**1. Online completion of each assessment assigned to them in their program.**

Assigned assessments are dependent on the individual registrant's licensing category. If a registrant upgrades their license mid-cycle, their current cycle will not change, but the additional assessment(s) will be added to their program:

- a. If the registrant has not yet completed their initial assessments, they will be required to complete the additional assessment(s) in the current cycle in order to proceed.
- b. If the registrant has completed their initial assessments and begun work on their learning goals, the additional assessment(s) can be completed in their next cycle.

Registrants who encounter technical issues during any of their timed assessments may ask to redo the assessment.

**2. Creation of at least six different learning goals, with a plan described for each.**

Learning goals and learning plans should be entered by each registrant in the appropriate fields of their online program. Each learning goal should relate to the development of the competency chosen by the registrant. Each learning plan should be clear and as descriptive as possible.

**3. Completion of appropriate educational activities relevant to the registrant's learning goals.**

All activities are to be added by the registrant into their online program, with proof of completion uploaded when applicable. Each activity chosen should be:

- relevant to the goal set out by the registrant;
- credible, in that the source material is trustworthy and reputable;
- verifiable, in that it could be confirmed in the case of an audit

**4. Reflection on the activities and outcomes experienced in attempting to achieve learning goals.**

Registrants must contemplate this for each goal and describe it for each in the appropriate section in their online program.

Registrants that have taken the Competency Gap Analysis (CGA) through the reinstatement process may not be required to complete the assessment portion in their first cycle on the CCP following reinstatement. Any subsequent bridging courses that may be assigned to these registrants resulting from the CGA can be built into the registrant's learning goals as a part of their CCP requirements, as above.

### PROGRAM COMPLETION

Requirements of the program are considered met when at least six goals contain the information required and each is marked by the registrant as "Completed" upon the end of their three-year cycle. Further review of the information submitted may be conducted during an audit, as described later in this document.

Registrants are also required to sign a QA declaration during the online renewal of their license, in the first renewal period following the completion of their cycle. By signing this declaration, registrants confirm they have met their obligation to complete mandatory QA program requirements and acknowledge their accountability for meeting the requirements as defined within policy. By signing this declaration, it is presumed that registrants are being truthful and adhering to COBC's Code of Ethics.

### EXTENSIONS & DEFERRALS

Registrants who may need an extension or deferral must submit their request in writing to the Registrar, with an explanation to support their request. An extension or deferral may be considered for reasons which may include some of the following:

- personal crisis or other extenuating circumstance that impacts the registrant's ability to cope with additional responsibilities
- personal illness
- illness of an immediate family member or where the registrant is the primary caregiver
- bereavement
- upcoming retirement from practice

The Registrar or appointed staff will advise the registrant of the decision to grant or deny the request, with or without conditions, as deemed necessary.

### PROGRAM AUDIT

An audit of programs is necessary to determine that the program is being used appropriately and as intended, and whether requirements are being met. At the end of each cycle, no less than 2% of registrant programs submitted will be randomly selected for audit by randomization software. The audit will be conducted by appointed staff to ensure registrants' continuing competency is supported by SMART goal

creation, that their programs contain activities that align with their goals, and that appropriate reflection has occurred.

Staff may consult with members of the QA Committee or an appointed content expert for guidance where needed during an audit. In the case where this is necessary, COBC will remove any personal identifiers from the selected program, to maintain registrant confidentiality and eliminate any possibility for bias.

Registrants will be exempt from an audit if they had been audited in their previous cycle.

## POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Once a cycle has ended, COBC will identify which registrants are due to have their programs completed.

Those who have completed the required steps of the program will be contacted by COBC to confirm completion, sometime after the deadline has passed. Those who have failed to complete all required steps by the end of their cycle and who have not been granted an extension will receive a notice to advise their program is incomplete.

Registrants who have not met continuing education requirements by completing their program by March 31 will be unable to renew their license. Registrants that have been granted an extension beyond March 31 may renew their license, with the condition they complete their program by the new deadline determined and communicated by the COBC.

Registrants who have been selected for an audit will also be contacted by the COBC and advised of their selection, along with detailed, individualized feedback from the results of the audit. The results of the audit may lead the COBC to request, among other possibilities, that the registrant:

- further clarify any of the information submitted
- provide evidence of the educational activities reported
- include additional details or reflection, and/or
- complete additional learning activities

The audit may also result in the COBC providing feedback only, without any additional steps or response required of the registrant.

While the audit is not meant to be punitive or disciplinary, failure or refusal to respond to a request by the COBC, or to satisfactorily complete the requests made by the COBC, may be considered unprofessional conduct and could result in the registrant being referred to the QA Committee for review.

The QA Committee may, in accordance with section 26(2) of the HPA, notify the Inquiry Committee if it has reasonable grounds to believe a registrant has knowingly given false information, has committed an act of professional misconduct, or demonstrated professional incompetence.

While referral to the Inquiry Committee is set out as a possibility in the HPA, it is expected that the focus of the CCP and the QA Committee will be to enhance the quality of opticianry in British Columbia through education, reflection, feedback, and support. Referral to the Inquiry Committee would be rare and only pursued if the QA Committee considers that there is a risk to public safety that cannot adequately be addressed through education and/or remediation.