



COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS
OF ALBERTA

2023-26 CYCLE




CONTINUING COMPETENCE PROGRAM

INFORMATION GUIDE




Table Of CONTENTS



Section One: Continuing Competence Background

-  Mandate to Protect the Public
-  Requirement to Administer a CCP
-  Competencies

Section Two: Continuing Competence Program Steps

-  Participation
-  Process

Step 1 - Taking a CCP Assessment

-  Assessment Results
-  Reading the Competency Profile

Step 2 - Creating Learning Plans & Completing Activities

-  Goal Setting
-  How to Choose Continuing Education Activities

Step 3 - Reflection and Submission

-  Submitting a Reflection
-  Submitting CCP Requirement

Section Three: Auditing by the College



Section One

CONTINUING COMPETENCE BACKGROUND

MANDATE TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

The mandate of the College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) is to protect the public, and the College is entirely accountable to the Minister of Health to carry out this mandate. The College makes all decisions with the COA Vision Statement and Mission Statement in mind:

MISSION

Our mission is to protect the public through proactive regulation of registered opticians.

Our primary concern is patient health and safety.
We protect the public by overseeing and regulating the opticianry profession in Alberta.

VISION

Our vision is that registered opticians offer quality patient care through safe, competent, and ethical practice. We strive to achieve our vision through accountability and accessibility to the public and a commitment to progressive regulatory governance.

PURPOSE

The College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) is the regulatory body that governs the practice of opticianry in the province. Formerly the Alberta College and Association of Opticians (ACAO), the COA was established on January 1, 2022, with the sole mandate of protecting the public.

REQUIREMENT TO ADMINISTER A CCP PROGRAM

The COA was established under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) in 2011 with a duty to serve and protect the public by regulating opticians, as well as to exercise its power and fulfill its responsibilities in the public interest. The HPA requires each health regulatory organization to develop and administer a Continuing Competence Program (CCP). The CCP supports and promotes high practice standards amongst health practitioners and ensures that the public's trust is well placed.

Opticians are entrusted by the public to provide safe, effective, and ethical healthcare at all times throughout their careers. They meet entry-to-practice competencies when they are first registered and continue to meet various benchmarks throughout their practice.

COMPETENCIES

A competency is a “measurable human capability that is required for effective performance. A competency may be comprised of knowledge, a single skill or ability, a personal characteristic, or a cluster of two or more of these attributes. Competencies are building blocks of work performance” (Marrlli, 2005). Continuing competency is defined as the ongoing ability to meet complex demands by demonstrating the required knowledge, skill, judgment, and attitude to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting. Health-care practitioners are individually responsible and accountable for their ongoing professional development as well as to provide satisfactory evidence of continued competence in their practice through participation in Continuing Competence Programs. The program design enables registrants to sustain and enhance competence, often measuring a minimum of competence regardless of the context of their practice.

The COA adopted the National Association of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR) competencies, which can be viewed at Nacor.ca.



Provide guidance and direction to the professional and practice setting.



Establish the essential and minimum expectations of the profession.



Provide the overarching founding for the education benchmark/curriculum, licensing exam, standards of practice, and ongoing competency and competency assessment tools.



Section Two

CONTINUING COMPETENCE PROGRAM STEPS



PARTICIPATION

All licensed opticians in all licensing categories must participate in the CCP, which includes registrants who are registered as non-practicing. Each registrant begins their three-year Continuing Competence cycle at the same time. This means that registrants entering practice partway through the cycle won't be able to meet all six Learning Plans before the end of the cycle; in these cases, the number of goals decreases by two each year.

Example: The three-year Continuing Competence cycle began on July 1, 2023. Registrant Jane became an optician in October of 2024. Jane's CCP requirements will include four Learning Goals instead of six, to be completed when the cycle ends on June 30, 2026.

PROCESS

The process can be broken down into the following three steps, which are further detailed below:



1. Take the Continuing Competence assessments.



2. Develop Learning Plans, set goals, and complete activities.



3. Reflect on your learning outcomes.



STEP 1 - TAKING THE CCP ASSESSMENTS

ASSESSMENTS

All registrants will be required to take both the Core and the Eyeglass assessments. Only contact lens fitters will take the additional Contact Lens assessment.

Only Refracting opticians will take the additional Refraction assessment.

The Continuing Competence assessment tool was designed to provide a competency profile to opticians to understand which areas of practice they should focus on for professional development.

The purpose of the assessment is to assess the knowledge of every optician ensuring that they practice competently, safely, and ethically in the interest of the public. The assessment is online and is to be taken independently by registrants. At the beginning of each three-year cycle, every registrant will take the assessment.

The assessment will be housed on the [COA Registrant Portal](#) and can be accessed through the registrant's login. Registrants can complete the assessments on a computer, smart phone, or tablet. The assessment consists of the following four sections, with a specific amount of time allotted for each:

- An 80-question multiple choice assessment for Core competencies (1hr30min)
- A 60-question multiple choice assessment for Eyeglass competencies (1hr10min)
- A 50-question multiple choice assessment for Contact Lens competencies (1hr)
- A 50-question multiple choice assessment for Refraction competencies (1hr)

Registrants should allot the necessary time to complete each assessment, as they are timed and cannot be paused. The time allotted does allow for registrants to work at a comfortable pace.

For instructions and further tips for taking the assessment, please review the [CCP walkthrough video](#).

(Note: Registrants are not permitted to reproduce, copy, save or share in any way the questions of the assessment, in order to help preserve its integrity.)



ASSESSMENT RESULTS

After the assessment is completed, registrants will be able to access their results immediately, giving them a competency profile.

It is important to remember that the assessment is not an exam; it is not pass or fail and a registrant's license will not be affected, no matter the results. Instead, the assessment will provide a profile for each registrant, which will allow them to see their strengths and weaknesses as mapped to the national competencies.

For a breakdown of each competency, [click here](#).

READING THE COMPETENCY PROFILE

The competency profile will provide separate results for each of the sections that have been completed and will show the performance level that the registrant performed at for each competency domain.

There are three different performance levels for each domain (each domain has 10 questions aligned to it, within every section):



Need to Address
(Five or less correct questions answered.)



Moderate
(Between 6-8 questions answered correctly.)



Exemplary
(Between 9-10 questions answered correctly.)

There is no penalty for scoring primarily "Need to address". Assessment results are simply meant to guide registrants on areas to focus on for professional development. The assessment is not a punitive process, nor does it use a punitive lens.



STEP 2 - CREATING LEARNING PLANS AND SETTING GOALS

GOAL SETTING

Registrants are required to develop a Learning Plan by which to guide their CCP for the three-year cycle. The Online Learning Plan is a section where each registrant will create their learning goals, log their activities, and reflect upon their Continuing Competence activities. The user-friendly interface will assist registrants in managing their own progress through completion.

To achieve their newly formed goals, registrants will need to make a plan. Part of creating a learning plan will be to find certain activities that align with their desired learning and development.

HOW TO CHOOSE ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Many of the existing opportunities for continuing education will still be available and relevant for the CCP. Registrants may choose to participate in similar courses or attend the conferences they have in the past, if those activities will contribute to achieving their specific goal. Activities do not need to be accredited; therefore, finding alternate resources is recommended.

EXAMPLES:





STEP 3 - REFLECTION AND SUBMISSION

SUBMITTING A REFLECTION

Once the chosen activities have been completed and the plan has been accomplished, registrants will log in once more to reflect on their learning. The reflection process allows registrants to have deep and thoughtful discussions with the self about the entire process: what they have learned, what they may need to learn further, and how they can perhaps get there. It is an introspective step and requires patience. If a registrant believes they did not fully achieve their learning goal via the activities they presented, one way to reflect would be: if they had chosen different activities, would they have achieved the goal with more ease?

EXAMPLES:

After creating her goal earlier in the year, with a plan to achieve it, it is now June 2021 and Jane has finished the activities she had planned. Jane logs back in to her online program to reflect on her learning, and she is prompted to consider some specific questions to help her:

- How did this help improve my patient care?
- What worked well?
- What didn't work well?
- What can I do differently next time?

Self-reflection will be different for everyone, as each registrant will have gone through something different. While the reflection process will provide some guided questions to help get started, registrants are encouraged to provide more detail to ensure that they have properly evaluated and thought about their learning.



MORE EXAMPLES:

Other questions that registrants could ask themselves during reflection, before submitting to the COA:

- Did you achieve your intended goal? Why or why not?
- What specifically did you learn?
- Was the chosen competency improved upon?
- Were other competencies developed that you did not expect? Which ones?
- How did this specific learning plan benefit your individual competence?
- How will you put your learning into practice?
- How were your knowledge or skills impacted?
- What, if any, changes will you be making on the job to improve your service/care?
- How did this learning impact your patients, and the people you work with? What are some examples of this impact?
- How did this learning impact the organization where you work?
- Were any new processes implemented because of your learning? What were they?
- Did this learning create any new networking opportunities? What were they?
- How did this learning plan benefit overall opticianry care/service?
- What is your new contribution to the profession, moving forward?

SUBMITTING CONTINUING COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS

Once a registrant has completed the activities in their learning plan, and they've properly reflected on the outcome online, they can submit the completion of that goal and move on to their next goal. By the end of the three-year cycle, registrants must have completed six goals, submitted for completion and review, online.

The COA will be auditing random submissions to review registrants' reflections. This is not meant to be a corrective or threatening process, but it is necessary to determine that the program is being used appropriately and whether completion requirements are being met.

Continuing Competence is important for everyone, in every profession. The COA wants to thank all registrants for their commitment to learning and development in the field of opticianry, and for their participation in this important program. The COA encourages anyone who might need it to contact the office for additional assistance or guidance, at any point throughout the cycle.



Section Three

AUDITING



AUDITING BY THE COLLEGE

The COA will randomly audit registrants' Continuing Competence Program profiles to ensure they are supported with SMART Goal Creation, and that their activities are in alignment with the areas of competence they are working toward enhancing by way of their Learning Goals. The College will also be auditing random submissions to review registrants' personal reflections. This is not meant to be a correct or threatening process, but it is necessary to determine that the program is being used appropriately and whether completion requirements are being met. This also allows the COA to see how the CCP is flowing, and where improvements may need to be made, as QA is an ever-expanding part of health regulation.

Continuing competence is important for everyone, in every profession. The COA wants to thank all registrants for their commitment to learning and development in the field of opticianry, and for their participation in this important program. The COA encourages anyone who might need it to contact the office for additional assistance or guidance, at any point throughout the cycle.

For more information, you may also review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, which can be found on the COA website at **albertaopticians.ca/continuing-competence-program/**.



**COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS
OF ALBERTA**

CONTACT INFORMATION

The COA office is closed to walk-in visitors. Staff are available in-person by appointment only. We continue to offer our services remotely during the following business hours:

Monday to Thursday
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. MST

(We are closed on statutory holidays.)

**COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS
OF ALBERTA**



1-780-429-4694



info@albertaopticians.ca



www.albertaopticians.ca



201, 2528 Ellwood Drive SW
Edmonton, Alberta T6X 0A9