

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 11, 2024

SUBJECT: Notification of adopted changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree (POD) Program Standards and Call for Comments on 2025 POD Standard 1.10, Glossary definition of 'ultimate pass rate,' and the 'ACOE-specified format' associated with 2025 POD Standard 1.10

TO: Deans and Presidents of Schools and Colleges of Optometry; Directors of Optometric Residencies; Supervisors of Optometric Residencies; Directors of Optometric Technician Programs, ACOE Consultants, AOA Board of Trustees, Executive Director, Management Support Team, and General Council; Executive Committee and Director of ARBO, AAO, NBEO, and OEBC; AOSA Executive Director and AOSA Trustees; ASCO Executive Director; Executive Directors and Board Members of State Boards; Canadian Licensure Boards; Presidents and Executive Directors of State Associations; Director of the VA Optometry Service; Military and Public Health Optometric Service Chiefs; CHEA staff; Institutional Accreditors; USDE staff; any interested party

FROM: G. Timothy Petito, O.D., ACOE Chair

DIST: ACOE, Ms. Puljak, Ms. Wirth, Ms. Mohr, Mr. Smith, Ms. Martin

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify the communities of interest of the revised 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards and to invite interested parties to submit comments regarding proposed changes:

TOPIC 1: *Notification* of adopted changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards

TOPIC 2: *Call for Comments* on proposed changes to 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standard 1.10

TOPIC 3: *Call for Comments* on proposed changes to the ACOE Glossary definition of 'ultimate pass rate'

TOPIC 4: *Call for Comments* on proposal for the 'ACOE-specified format' associated with 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standard 1.10

The ACOE will consider comments received at its Fall meeting scheduled October 25-27, 2024. Please submit any comments by **August 23, 2024** and ***please specify the relevant TOPIC #*** when doing so. Submit comments to accredit@theacoe.org.

TOPIC 1

Background: At its October 27-29, 2023, Fall meeting the ACOE adopted the (1) Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards, effective January 1, 2025.

On February 22-23, 2024, the Leadership and Professional Development Committee of the ACOE convened to address the development of training, resources, and other guidance to facilitate the transition to the new ACOE Standards. During the Committee's review, it developed recommendations for Council regarding additional changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards.

During the Council's Winter meeting, held February 23-25, 2024, the Council accepted proposed changes following its review of recommendations by the Leadership and Professional Development Committee and voted to distribute the revised Standards to the communities of interest in a call for comments. The Standards with proposed changes included Standards 2.19, 6.13, 6.14, 6.15, 6.21, 8.4, and 8.8.

On March 27, 2024, a memorandum was distributed to the communities of interest inviting interested parties to submit comments on the proposed changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards. Comments were due May 1, 2024. The ACOE received no comments specific to the proposed changes.

During its June 19-21, 2024, Annual meeting, the ACOE adopted the following changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards, which will be effective for all programs on January 1, 2025.

(Additions are underlined, deletions are ~~struck through~~.)

2.19 By the time of graduation, students must be able to demonstrate an understanding of research principles and conduct to critically assess the literature.

INTENT: Certain core competencies must be attained by graduates of all accredited programs.

Examples of Evidence:

- Applicable course syllabi/course learning objectives
- ~~Evidence of student research output~~

6.13 The program must ~~publish~~ document, make accessible to students, and adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) addressing the program's academic and professional standards, grading system, and determination of satisfactory academic progress.

6.14 The program must ~~publish~~ document, make accessible to students, and adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) addressing attendance.

6.15 The program must ~~publish~~ document, make accessible to students and adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) addressing disciplinary action taken against students, including provisions for due process.

6.16 The program must ~~publish~~ document, make accessible to students and adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) addressing dismissal and reinstatement of students, including a provision for due process.

6.21 The program must ~~publish~~ document, make accessible to students and adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) for the acceptance, investigation, adjudication, and resolution of student grievances and include provisions regarding nonretaliation.

8.4 The program must ~~publish~~ document and make available to staff, student clinicians, residents, and faculty, a clinic manual which includes all clinic policies and procedures.

8.8 The clinics in the program's clinical patient care program must adhere to policy(ies) and procedure(s) addressing regulatory compliance and risk management, including liability, safety, and physical security, and provide for remediation when deficiencies are identified.

The updated 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards are posted on the ACOE website, www.theACOE.org.

TOPIC 2

Background: On March 27, 2024, a memorandum was distributed to the communities of interest inviting interested parties to submit comments on the proposed changes to the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards. Comments were due May 1, 2024. While the ACOE received no comments relative to the proposed changes, the Council received and considered comments regarding other Standards. The Council voted to accept proposed changes to 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standard 1.10 and to distribute the proposed changes to the communities of interest in a call for comments.

Summary of Changes:

(Additions are underlined, deletions are ~~struck through~~.)

- 1.10 The program must *publish* on its website using the ACOE-specified format current and reliable information on its performance with respect to student achievement. Data must be readily accessible on the program's website and include, but need not be limited to:
- (1) graduation rates for each of the three most recent graduating classes;
 - (2) attrition rates for each of the three most recent academic years;
 - (3) annual institutional *pass rates for all first-time takers* of NBEO Parts I, II, and III for each of the three most recent academic years compared with national averages;
 - (4) annual institutional *pass rates for all first-time takers* of each part of the OEBC examination series for each of the three most recent academic years compared with national averages; and
 - (5) the *ultimate pass rate* of the NBEO ~~and OEBC~~ examination series for each of the three most recent academic years compared with national averages.

Note: In cases where a program offers an *alternate pathway*, at a minimum, data specified within this *Standard* must be *published* separately for the *alternate pathway*. When five (5) or more of a program's students and/or graduates participate in any or all parts of a licensing examination series (inclusive of the NBEO and OEBC) in a given academic year, the associated pass rate results must be published. When the number of takers is less than five (5), the program is not required to publish pass rate results.

INTENT: Published student achievement outcomes that are equivalently defined across professional optometric degree programs provide transparency to the public and support decision-making by prospective students.

Examples of Evidence:

- Website URL

For Proposed Programs Seeking *Preliminary Approval* Status: 1.10 applies; documented plan for *publication* is acceptable.

Rationale: When a small population completes an examination series, (1) publishing the results may enable the identification of individuals' performance results and (2) publishing the results in the case of a very small population provides limited utility for prospective students to evaluate the program. Guidance received by the ACOE was that the risk of individual identification is sufficiently reduced with populations of five or more.

Request: Interested parties are invited to review the proposed changes and provide comments by the due date, **August 23, 2024**, to accredit@theacoe.org.

TOPIC 3

Background: During the Council review of the 2024 professional optometric degree program annual report submissions and in conjunction with the discussion leading to the changes proposed under **TOPIC 2**, the ACOE

determined changes to the Glossary definition of 'ultimate pass rate' are warranted. The Council is proposing the definition of 'ultimate pass rate' be limited to the NBEO examination series and clarified.

Summary of Changes:

(Additions are underlined, deletions are ~~struck through~~.)

ultimate pass rate, NBEO – A measure representing the proportion of students graduating between October 1 and September 30 of the following year at the time of graduation having passed all three parts of the NBEO licensing examinations series by September 30. The ultimate pass rate is computed as a ratio; the

- numerator is ~~the sum of the number of graduates students at the time of graduation~~ having passed all three parts of the *NBEO* examination series ~~and the number of students at the time of graduation having passed both parts of the *OEBC* examination series~~; and the
- denominator is ~~the sum of the number of graduates students at the time of graduation~~ having attempted all three parts of the *NBEO* ~~and the number of students at the time of graduation having attempted both parts of the *OEBC* examination series~~.

~~When a student attempts both *NBEO* and *OEBC* examination series at the time of graduation, that student is counted once in the ultimate pass rate calculation.~~

Rationale: The value to prospective students of requiring programs to publish a 'combined' version of an ultimate pass rate is not commensurate with the level of effort it would take for programs to seek to compute this; in fact, a 'combined' ultimate pass rate might result in increased confusion. A process exists for programs to collaborate with the NBEO to compute ultimate pass rate and the ACOE aims to align with this process and approach. Moreover, a complicating factor in deviating from the current process between the NBEO and the programs is that when students and/or graduates opt to not share their examination results with their programs, the programs' ability to compute ultimate pass rate is adversely affected.

Request: Interested parties are invited to review the proposed changes and provide comments by the due date, **August 23, 2024**, to accredit@theacoe.org.

TOPIC 4

Background: Standard 1.10 of the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards references an 'ACOE-specified format' for programs to publish current and reliable information on performance with respect to student achievement. During the Council's June 19-21, 2024, Annual meeting, the Council accepted a format for distribution to the communities of interest in a call for comments.

Request: Interested parties are invited to review the proposed changes and provide comments by the due date, **August 23, 2024**, to accredit@theacoe.org.

Proposed Format:

See following pages.

Graduation and Attrition Rates [versions are illustrative of what would be reviewed by the Council during the 2024 annual review]

Version for a typical 4-year program (illustration is for a program with 64 matriculants)

Year Matriculated	2017		2018		2019	
	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants
Graduated in 4 years	53	82.8%	56	87.5%	54	85.9%
Graduated in 5 years or less	61	95.3%	59	92.2%	TBD	TBD
Graduated at any time	62	96.9%	59	92.2%	54	85.9%
Still enrolled or on leave of absence	0	0.0%	1	1.6%	2	3.1%
Completed curricular requirements met, but not graduation requirements	0	0.0%	2	3.1%	4	6.3%
Attrition for academic reasons	1	1.6%	2	3.1%	2	3.1%
Attrition for other reasons	1	1.6%	0	0.0%	2	3.1%

Guidance for programs

Include all graduating in 4 or fewer years
 Include all (cumulative) graduating in 5 or fewer years
 Include all (cumulative) graduating to date of publication
 Students included in this row exclude those in the row below.
 If the program does not have graduation requirements beyond its curricular requirements (such as passage of NBEO), this row is not required.

The versions depicted below are for cases where a professional optometric degree program offers an alternate pathway (see ACOE Glossary for definition of 'alternate pathway').

Version for a 3-year alternate pathway (illustration is for a program with 10 matriculants)

Year Matriculated	2018		2019		2020	
	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants
Graduated in 3 years	10	100.0%	9	90.0%	9	90.0%
Graduated in 4 years or less	10	100.0%	10	100.0%	NA	NA
Graduated at any time	10	100.0%	10	100.0%	9	90.0%
Still enrolled or on leave of absence	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Completed curricular requirements met, but not graduation requirements	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Attrition for academic reasons	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	10.0%
Attrition for other reasons	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Guidance for programs

Include all graduating in 3 or fewer years
 Include all (cumulative) graduating in 4 or fewer years
 Include all (cumulative) graduating to date of publication
 Students included in this row exclude those in the row below.
 If the program does not have graduation requirements beyond its curricular requirements (such as passage of NBEO), this row is not required.

Version for a 5-year alternate pathway (illustration is for a program with 10 matriculants)

Year Matriculated	2016		2017		2018	
	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants	#	% of matriculants
Graduated in 5 years	10	100.0%	9	90.0%	9	90.0%
Graduated in 6 years or less	10	100.0%	10	100.0%	NA	NA
Graduated at any time	10	100.0%	10	100.0%	9	90.0%
Still enrolled or on leave of absence	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Completed curricular requirements met, but not graduation requirements	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Attrition for academic reasons	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	10.0%
Attrition for other reasons	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Guidance for programs

Include all graduating in 5 or fewer years

Include all (cumulative) graduating in 6 or fewer years

Include all (cumulative) graduating to date of publication

Students included in this row exclude those in the row below.

If the program does not have graduation requirements beyond its curricular requirements (such as passage of NBEO), this row is not required.

Additional guidance for programs related to publication of Graduation and Attrition rates:

- The ACOE Glossary includes a definition of ‘matriculation/matriculating.’ Programs must adhere to this definition when publishing outcomes
 - matriculation/matriculating – the process of enrolling as a student in a college or school. A ‘matriculating class’ includes all students who initially enrolled in the college or school within an academic year and includes students admitted to the program with advanced standing, such as international students, and students transferring from other programs.
 - Note – transfers from one pathway within an institution to another are not counted as ‘transfers’ in the context of determining a matriculating class
- When program/pathway lengths vary, the display needs to show the results for the most recent class that graduated on schedule and results for the two prior classes.
- Display percentages to one decimal place. Round up when the digit in the hundredths place is 5 or greater.
- A student who graduates within the same calendar year as the end of their third, fourth, or fifth academic year is included within the 3-year, 4-year, or 5-year graduation rates, respectively.
- If a program employs graduation requirements outside of meeting the program’s curricular requirements (e.g., passage of any Part of the NBEO examination series), these requirements must be clearly disclosed with the data presentation.
- Each matriculant within each class must be reflected in the data presented and be counted only once in one of the following categories: (1) graduated, (2) still enrolled or on leave of absence, (3) completed all curricular requirements but not met all graduation requirements; (4) no longer with the program due to academic reasons, or (5) no longer with the program due to other, non-academic reasons.
- Programs may optionally display data for more academic years than the minimum required by the ACOE.

Annual Institutional Pass Rates for all First-time Takers of NBEO Parts I, II, and III [versions are illustrative of what would be reviewed by the Council during the 2024 annual review]

NBEO Part I Applied Basic Science

Academic Year (9/1-8/31)	# of first-time takers	first time taker pass rate	national first time taker pass rate	program difference, % points
2022-2023	62	69.4%	65.8%	+ 3.6 points
2021-2022	61	72.1%	63.7%	+8.4 points
2020-2021	62	69.4%	71.9%	- 2.5 points

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

NBEO Part II Patient Assessment and Management

Academic Year (9/1-8/31)	# of first-time takers	first time taker pass rate	national first time taker pass rate	program difference, % points
2022-2023	60	85.0%	82.9%	+ 2.1 points
2021-2022	63	88.9%	84.7%	+ 4.2 points
2020-2021	62	83.9%	88.4%	- 4.5 points

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

NBEO Part III Clinical Skills Examination [will change to Patient Encounters and Performance Skills]

Academic Year (7/1-6/30)	# of first-time takers	first time taker pass rate	national first time taker pass rate	program difference, % points
2022-2023	61	82.0%	74.4%	+ 7.6 points
2021-2022	62	80.6%	79.7%	+ 0.9 points
2020-2021	62	87.1%	88.4%	- 1.3 points

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

Guidance for programs related to publication of NBEO First-time Taker Pass Rates:

- All programs must include the following clarifying verbiage with the presentation of NBEO pass rates:
 - Published results include the performance of all first-time takers of each NBEO examination Part within the specified timeframe regardless of year of enrollment, year of graduation, or graduation status; first-time taker pass rates published on the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) website ([link](#)) are limited to candidates that have graduated.
- Display percentages to one decimal place. Round up when the digit in the hundredths place is 5 or greater.
- Do not include in results published individuals who took the exam prior to matriculation for purposes of advanced standing.
- Programs may optionally include the last column, 'program difference.' If this column is included, note that the difference is stated in percentage points rather than percent.
- Programs may optionally display data for more academic years than the minimum required by the ACOE.
- Programs may optionally display results for First Timer Pass Rates as published on the ASCO website; when a program opts to do so, the presentation must be clear that results displayed are limited to candidates that have graduated.
- Programs are only required to publish pass rates for all first attempt candidates of NBEO Parts I, II, and III when the program has five (5) or more takers (this is tentative – see **TOPIC 1B**)

Annual Institutional Pass Rates for all First Attempt Candidates of OEBC Written and OSCE Exams *[versions are illustrative of what would be reviewed by the Council during the 2024 annual review]*

OEBC Written

Academic Year (9/1-8/31)	# of first-time writers	first time writer pass rate	pass rate for all first-time writers (all programs)	program difference, % points
2022-2023	62	95.2%	93.9%	+ 1.3 points
2021-2022	61	88.5%	88.2%	+ 0.3 points
2020-2021	62	95.2%	91.9%	+ 3.3 points

Program guidance: Includes the Fall and Spring administrations

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

OEBC Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

Academic Year (9/1-8/31)	# of first-time writers	first time writer pass rate	pass rate for all first-time writers (all programs)	program difference, % points
2022-2023	60	85.0%	81.7%	+ 3.3 points
2021-2022	63	88.9%	79.8%	+ 9.1 points
2020-2021	62	83.9%	77.9%	+ 6.0 points

Program guidance: Includes the Fall and Spring administrations

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

Guidance for programs related to publication of OEBC First-time Writer Pass Rates:

- Display percentages to one decimal place. Round up when the digit in the hundredths place is 5 or greater.
- Do not include in results published individuals who took the exam prior to matriculation for purposes of advanced standing.
- Programs may optionally include the last column, 'program difference.' If this column is included, note that the difference is stated in percentage points rather than percent.
- Programs may optionally display data for more academic years than the minimum required by the ACOE.
- Programs are only required to publish pass rates for all first attempt candidates of OEBC Written and OEBC OSCE when the program has five (5) or more takers (this is tentative – see **TOPIC 1B**)

Ultimate Passage Rate *[version is illustrative of what would be reviewed by the Council during the 2024 annual review]*

NBEO Ultimate Passage Rate

Academic Year (10/1-9/30)	# of candidates	ultimate pass rate	national ultimate pass rate	program difference, % points
2022-2023	61	82.0%	83.8%	- 1.3 points
2021-2022	62	90.3%	87.8%	+ 2.5 points
2020-2021	62	87.1%	92.5%	- 5.4 points

Program guidance: Inclusion of this column is optional

Guidance for programs related to publication of NBEO Ultimate Pass Rates:

- All programs to publish the definition of ‘ultimate pass rate’ with publication of results (see **TOPIC 2**).
- All programs must include the following clarifying verbiage with the presentation of NBEO pass rates:
 - Published results represent the proportion of students successfully graduating within the specified timeframe that have attempted all three Parts of the NBEO Examination Series and passed all three Parts by September 30.
- Ultimate Pass Rate results should match those published on the [ASCO website](#)
- If a program employs graduation requirements outside of meeting the program’s curricular requirements (e.g., passage of any Part of the NBEO examination series), these requirements must be clearly disclosed with the data presentation.
- Display percentages to one decimal place. Round up when the digit in the hundredths place is 5 or greater.
- Programs may optionally include the last column, ‘program difference.’ If this column is included, note that the difference is stated in percentage points rather than percent.
- Programs may optionally display data for more academic years than the minimum required by the ACOE.
- Programs are only required to publish ultimate pass rate when the program has five (5) or more takers (this is tentative – see **TOPIC 1B**)