

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Notification of changes related to the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards and to the 2025 Optometric Residency Program Standards, which will become effective July 1, 2025

TO: Deans and Presidents of Schools and Colleges of Optometry; Directors of Optometric Residencies at the Schools and College of Optometry; Supervisors of Optometric Residencies; ACOE Consultants; Federal Service Chiefs

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

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

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify stakeholders of changes related to **(Topic 1)** the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards and to **(Topic 2)** the 2025 Optometric Residency Program Standards, which will become effective July 1, 2025.

- Changes to the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards **(Topic 1)** are effective immediately
- Changes to the 2025 Optometric Residency Program Standards **(Topic 2)** will become effective July 1, 2025

Topic 1

Standard 2.10.2.1 of the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards and Standard 2.25 of the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards, which will become effective on January 1, 2025, address the Council's expectations of professional optometric degree programs with respect to program review and monitoring of externship sites, specifically program visits to externship sites.

Following a call for comments, distributed to the communities of interest on March 20, 2023, and due April 19, 2023, the Council issued a memorandum on July 20, 2023, notifying the communities of interest that the following version of ACOE Standard 2.10.2.1 was adopted and effective October 7, 2023 (the end date of the COVID-19 flexibilities).

2.10.2.1 Each externship site must be visited by personnel designated by the program within one year prior to placement of the first extern(s) and thereafter on a periodic basis of no less than every four years. Note: The initial visit must be in person; thereafter, every other visit on an alternating basis may be conducted virtually. Visits conducted jointly with other professional optometric degree programs are acceptable.

Examples of Evidence:

- Policy and/or procedure that addresses visits to externship sites
- Administrative structure charged with visiting sites
- Records showing evidence of visits
- Log showing dates of visits and extern placement along with scheduled visits.

In its October 27-29, 2023, Fall meeting, following a call for comments distributed to the communities of interest on July 20, 2023, and due September 3, 2023, the Council adopted the Professional Optometric Degree Program

Standards, effective January 1, 2025, marking the culmination of the ACOE's Comprehensive Standard Review Process. Standard 2.25 of the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Program Standards differs from Standard 2.10.2.1 of the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards. The changes relative to Standard 2.10.2.1 are shown in the highlighted text.

2.25 Each externship site must be visited by personnel designated by the program within two (2) years prior to placement of the first extern(s) and thereafter on a periodic basis of no more than every four years. The externship site visit must be in person initially and at least every eight (8) years thereafter; interim visits may be conducted virtually. Shared results from visits conducted by other professional optometric degree programs are acceptable.

INTENT: The program visits each externship site to validate whether it complies with the program's selection criteria and to ensure it supports the program's mission, goals, and objectives. Each externship site is visited in person at least once during each standard accreditation cycle.

Examples of Evidence:

- Policy and/or procedure that addresses visits to externship sites
- Administrative structure charged with visiting sites
- Records showing evidence of visits
- Log showing dates of visits and extern placement along with scheduled visits.

The rationale for the changes:

- The timeframe allowable for programs to visit prospective externship sites was extended from one (1) year to two (2) years to allow programs a greater degree of flexibility and to better align with existing processes where a prospective program is vetted prior to a site being made available to students for selection.
- The terminology "no less than every four years" was changed to "no more than every four years" to correct the verbiage and clarify Council's expectations.
- The verbiage "every other visit on an alternating basis" was changed to "at least every eight (8) years" to allow programs flexibility and to assure that an on-site visit occurs at least once each accreditation cycle.

During the Council's February 23-25, 2024 Winter meeting, the Council voted to adopt the verbiage in Standard 2.25 of the 2025 Professional Optometric Degree Programs Standards in place of Standard 2.10.2.1 of the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards with an immediate effective date.

The revised Standard 2.10.2.1 has been updated within the 2017 Professional Optometric Degree Standards published to the ACOE website and is effective as of its publication.

Topic 2

At the time of adoption of the 2025 Optometric Residency Program Standards, Standards 2.2 and 2.3 did not include examples of evidence. At its February 23-25, 2024, Winter meeting, the ACOE adopted the following examples of evidence for Standards 2.2 and 2.3 (added language is highlighted):

2.2 The duration of the residency must be equivalent to a minimum of 12 months of full-time training.

INTENT: A minimum program length is defined to which all programs comply for the conferring of a completion certificate.

Examples of Evidence:

- Residency Handbook

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- Website URL(s) describing residency program
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2.3 The program must demonstrate that the resident's involvement in patient care supports the fulfillment of the program's *mission, goals, and objectives* and results in resident's attainment of advanced competencies.

INTENT: The engagement in patient care activities prepares the resident to practice independently with *advanced competency*.

Examples of Evidence:

- Patient encounter logs
- Evaluations of resident
- Annual assessment of *mission, goals, and objectives* fulfillment

I hope that you find this clarification to be useful. If you have any additional questions, comments, or suggestions for the ACOE, please contact accredit@theacoe.org.

For more information, please review the [ACOE Policy & Procedure Manual](#) available at www.theacoe.org.