## Standards for professional optometric degree programs seeking preliminary approval pre-accreditation status

## Effective January 1, 2019

## Adopted by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE)

## at the June 21-23, 2018 ACOE Annual Meeting; revisions adopted by the ACOE at its Winter Meeting, February 24-26, 2023.

## 

**Standard I – Mission, Goals and Objectives**

1.1 The program must have a statement of its mission, and the goals and objectives by which it intends to fulfill its mission.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Program’s mission, goals and objectives*

1.1.1 The program must identify where it plans to publish its mission and goals.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Catalog*
* *Web site*
* *Brochure*

1.1.2 The goals and objectives must include teaching and learning, research or scholarly activity, and public service.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Program’s goals and objectives*

1.2 The mission, goals, and objectives must give emphasis to a professional optometric degree program whose graduates possess the attributes, knowledge, skills, and ethical values required for independently practicing contemporary optometry.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Program’s statement of attributes, knowledge, skills and ethical values*

1.3 The program must identify the outcomes measures it will use to evaluate its effectiveness, and develop an assessment plan to demonstrate how it will use assessment to improve its performance. Such measures must include but not be limited to: matriculation data; student academic performance; retention rate; results from examinations administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO), Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) or equivalent testing agencies; graduation rates; licensing examination results; and career placement.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Assessment plan detailing how assessment will occur and what measures will be used, including:*
* *Matriculation data*
* *Student academic performance*
* *Retention rate*
* *Graduation rate*
* *NBEO passage rates for all first-time takers*
* *Career placement, i.e., proportion of graduates employed, enrolled in a residency or pursuing further education in optometry or a related field*

1.4 The program must identify the information it plans to publish on its performance, including student achievement and describe where it plans to publish the information. Data to be published must include but not be limited to: graduation rates; attrition rates; and first time pass rates for all students taking the exam in each administration for parts I, II, and III of the NBEO exam and the ultimate passage rate for each cohort graduating within each of the three previous academic years, or pass rates on OEBC or equivalent examinations.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Plans to publish performance measures*
* *Graduation rate, i.e., four and five year program completion rates for each of the three most recent graduating classes*
* *Attrition rates for each of the three most recent academic years, i.e. proportion of students leaving the program for academic or other reasons*
* *First time pass rate for each part of the NBEO exam and ultimate pass rate for each cohort graduating within each of the three previous academic years*
* *Career placement*
* *Placement in residencies*

1.5 The program must articulate its plans to conduct a regular review of its program mission, goals and objectives and revise them as necessary

*Example of Evidence*

* *Description of review process including plans to include involvement of stakeholders*

**Standard II – Curriculum**

2.1 The program must establish curricular learning objectives and demonstrate how its proposed curriculum will fulfill the intent of the mission to prepare graduates to independently practice contemporary optometry.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Copy of curriculum*
* *Curricular learning objectives*
* *Clinical competencies*
* *Course learning objectives*
* *Relevant educational outcome measures*

2.2 The program must develop a detailed professional optometric curriculum of at least four academic years that

1. includes basic science instruction designed to provide a foundation of knowledge in the physical, biological and behavioral sciences essential for clinical optometric care;
2. includes clinical instruction and practice consisting of didactic, laboratory and supervised clinical experience in the examination, diagnosis, treatment and management of patients; and
3. establishes learning objectives for each course in the curriculum, including clinical rotations.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Copy of curriculum*
* *Course descriptions*
* *Course learning objectives*
* *Outcome assessment relative to course objectives*

2.3 Syllabi must be developed for each course in the first-year curriculum that include at minimum

1. course learning objectives;
2. a topical outline;
3. a lecture and laboratory schedule;
4. methods of assessment of student learning; and
5. the name and qualifications of the instructor of record and other instructors in the course.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Syllabi for first-year courses*

2.4 The program must:

1. specify how the effectiveness of the curriculum will be assessed, including the outcome measures to be utilized; and
2. design a system to manage and review the curriculum that includes evaluation by students, faculty, administration and other appropriate stakeholders.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Outcome measures*
* *Curriculum assessment plan*
* *Minutes of meetings in which curriculum is evaluated*

2.5 In the event instruction in the optometric program will be shared with another program or institution, the program must provide evidence that the optometry program will retain primary responsibility for its curriculum.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Documents delineating responsibilities in shared programs*

2.6 Clinical instruction and practice must consist of didactic, laboratory, and supervised clinical experience in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, and management of patients.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Copy of curriculum*
* *Outcome assessment relative to curricular objectives*

2.7 The program must develop a plan to ensure that the quantity, quality and variety of experiences in the supervised care of patients will be sufficient to develop clinical competency which will prepare students to independently practice contemporary optometry. This plan, at minimum, must include:

1. Clinical competencies necessary for the contemporary practice of optometry (see ACOE Standard 2.8) and the manner in which student attainment of these competencies will be evaluated;
2. A description of the proposed clinical experience for each student including location of clinical facilities and nature of clinical rotations;
3. The minimum number of patient encounters expected per student for each term of the curriculum and what defines a patient encounter;
4. A process whereby quantity, quality and variety of patient encounters will be measured; and
5. Plans to remedy any shortfall in patient encounters.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of clinical competencies*
* *Description of processes to be used to measure quantity, quality and variety of experiences*
* *Proposed student portfolio of clinical experience*
* *Target number of student-patient encounters*

2.8 The program must establish a set of clinical competencies necessary for the contemporary practice of optometry and a plan to evaluate each student’s attainment of these competencies.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of clinical competencies*
* *Medical record review form*
* *Form for faculty evaluation of clinical performance*
* *Course and clinical learning objectives*

2.8.1 The graduate must be able to identify, record and analyze pertinent history and problems presented by the patient.

2.8.2 The graduate must be able to demonstrate the necessary skills to examine and evaluate the patient to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis.

2.8.3 The graduate must be able to formulate a treatment and management plan and understand the implications of various treatment and management options.

2.8.4 The graduate must be able to provide preventive care, patient education and counseling.

2.8.5 The graduate must be able to use the knowledge of optometry’s role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of the patients and populations being served.

2.8.6 The graduate must be able to apply knowledge of professional, ethical, legal, and public health issues applicable to the delivery of optometric care.

2.8.7 The graduate must be able to demonstrate understanding of research principles and conduct in order to critically assess the literature.

2.8.8 The graduate must be able to effectively communicate orally and in writing with other professionals and patients.

2.8.9 The graduate must be able to demonstrate basic life support skills for emergencies encountered in optometric practice.

2.8.10 The graduate must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and philosophy of optometric practice management.

2.9 The program must provide written letters of intent from potential externship and affiliated sites that demonstrate sufficient capacity to meet the program’s minimum number of patient encounters per student for external rotations.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Written letters of intent*

2.9 The program must provide written letters of intent from potential externship and affiliated sites that demonstrate sufficient capacity to meet the program’s minimum number of patient encounters per student for external rotations.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Written letters of intent*

2.9.1 The program must establish and adhere to criteria for the selection of externship sites. These criteria must address at a minimum:

* Space and equipment
* Qualifications of supervising faculty
* Clinical privileges of supervising faculty where applicable
* Clinical practice guidelines employed at the site

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Copy of criteria for selection*
* *Copy of site selection procedure*

2.9.2 The program must formulate a monitoring system to assure that clinical affiliates or externship sites provide clinical experiences that meet the program’s mission, goals, and objectives.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of monitoring procedure*
* *Plan for visiting proposed externship sites*
* *Administrative structure to monitor sites*
* *Analysis of clinical experience expected to be provided at sites*

2.9.3 The program must formulate a system to provide educational direction to the externship and affiliated sites.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Externship manual*
* *Description of proposed in-service programs, training and other educational guidance provided to externships*

**Standard III – Research and Scholarly Activity**

3.1 The program must develop a plan showing how it will support, encourage and maintain research and scholarly activity.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Five year goals for research*
* *Faculty workload formula*
* *Policies that encourage research and scholarly activity*
* *Financial support*
* *Internal grant programs*
* *Description of research facilities*
* *List of faculty publications*
* *List of current grants and contracts*
* *Program infrastructure support (e.g. grant writing, biostatistics, graphics, technology)*
* *Mentoring and training opportunities*

3.2 The program must have a plan to provide opportunities for students to participate in research and other scholarly activities mentored by faculty*.*

**Standard IV – Governance, Regional Accreditation, Administration, and Finances**

4.1 The doctor of optometry program must be offered by an autonomous unit organized as a school or college of optometry (within a university or as an independent entity). This includes autonomy to manage the professional program within published policies and procedures, as well as applicable state and federal regulations.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Appointment letter for program’s chief executive officer*
* *Board of Trustees policies*
* *Administrative policies*
* *Organizational Chart*
* *Position descriptions of key administrators*

4.1.1 There must be policies concerning governance issues including, but not limited to, conflict of interest, due process, disclosure, non-discrimination, confidentiality of records and fiscal accountability.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Board of Trustees Policies*
* *Administrative policies*

4.1.2 The program must be organized in such a way as to facilitate open communication among administrators, faculty, students, staff and other constituencies.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Program bylaws*
* *Organizational chart*
* *Plans to conduct surveys of constituents*
* *Plans to facilitate communications among constituents*

4.1.3 The institutional structure must clearly assign authority and responsibility for the hiring, on-going evaluation, retention and discharge of the program’s chief executive officer.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Board of Trustees policies*
* *Appointment letter*
* *Organizational chart*
* *Governance policies*
* *Evaluation instrument or procedures*

4.2 The program must be conducted at an institution that is accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or is recognized by a provincial ministry of education in Canada. A professional optometric degree program that is not a component of a regionally accredited institution must achieve institutional accreditation from the appropriate regional accrediting body. For the purpose of preliminary approval, attainment of pre-accreditation status from a regional accrediting body would meet the requirements of this standard.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Letter of institutional accreditation or preaccreditation*
* *Institutional accreditation report*

4.3 The program’s chief executive officer and a separate chief academic officer must both be in place for at least six months as of the time of submission for consideration for Stage Two designation. The program’s chief executive officer or chief academic officer must have a professional optometric degree. Either of the program’s chief executive officer or chief academic officer must have experience in higher education. Both the chief executive officer and chief academic officer must be qualified to provide leadership in optometric education, scholarly activity, and patient care.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Curriculum vitae*
* *Copy of transcript*
* *Copy of diploma*
* *Description of process to verify credentials*

4.4 There must be a clear definition of the chief executive officer’s authority and responsibility for the program.

4.4.1 The program’s chief executive officer must have the authority and responsibility for fiscal management of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Position description*
* *Administrative policies*

4.5 The program must develop a comprehensive staffing plan to include administrators and support staff, which delineates a time line for hiring.

*Example of evidence*

* *Table of positions with the proposed date of hire and percent of time devoted to administration and other areas of responsibility*

4.5.1 There must be clearly defined reporting relationships, performance expectations, and assessment procedures for all administrators.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Organizational chart*
* *Administrative policies*
* *Documentation or narrative describing performance and assessment procedures*

4.6 The program must have a projected cash flow analysis of revenue and expenditures for the first five years of program operation and must possess the financial resources required to develop and sustain the program on a continuing basis and to accomplish its mission, goals and objectives.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Applicable financial and/or budgetary documents*
* *Projected cash flow analysis of revenue and expenditures for the first five years of program operation*
* *Analysis of historical financial resources for the institution housing the program (if applicable)*
* *Projection of financial resources*

4.6.1 The program must demonstrate that it plans to utilize sound and generally accepted financial management procedures to assure effective monitoring, control and accountability of its fiscal resources.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Most recent audited financial statement for the institution housing the program (if applicable)*
* *Administrative policies and procedures*

**Standard V – Faculty**

5.1 The number, qualifications, expertise and experience of faculty members must be sufficient to meet the stated mission and goals of the program.

5.1.1 The program must establish student-to-faculty teaching ratios for classroom, laboratory and clinical instruction for all years of the curriculum.

5.1.2 The program must determine the number and qualifications of faculty members that will be hired to deliver the full curriculum and perform research/ scholarship, administrative and service functions in support of a fully operational program.

5.1.3 The program must establish a detailed timetable for hiring of faculty.

5.1.4 The program must have hired sufficient qualified faculty members to deliver the first year of the curriculum and perform requisite research/scholarship, administrative and service functions during the first year of the program’s operation.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Proposed student to faculty ratios for each aspect of the curriculum*
* *Proposed number, qualifications and assignments of faculty*
* *Timetable for hiring of faculty*
* *Status of faculty searches*
* *Teaching assignments for first year of curriculum*
* *CVs of faculty members hired to teach in first year of curriculum*
* *List of teaching and other responsibilities of hired faculty members*

5.1.5 The program must establish and utilize a process to ensure that each faculty member holds an earned terminal degree or first professional degree from an institution accredited by a recognized agency or its foreign equivalent or has certification or licensure related to their primary instructional assignment.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *List of faculty members with abbreviated biographies and teaching responsibilities*
* *Copies of faculty CVs (on-site)*
* *Description of process to verify faculty credentials*

5.2 The program must formulate and implement a system to enable faculty participation in the governance of the program including a faculty committee structure and preliminary faculty bylaws.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *A list of faculty committees and membership*
* *Faculty meeting schedules and minutes*
* *Minutes of faculty meetings (on-site)*
* *Faculty charter, bylaws, contract, standard operating procedure, etc.*
* *Description of faculty committee structure, membership, objectives, reporting procedures*
* *Evidence of governance issues resolved or identified by the faculty process (i.e. agendas, minutes, formal letters, white papers, votes)*

5.3 The program must formulate and implement a faculty workload policy that provides faculty members with adequate allocated time and resources to enhance their skills and leadership abilities in education, service, research and scholarship.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of how faculty workload is determined*
* *Description of faculty development programs*
* *Sabbatical policies*
* *Faculty technology support*
* *Description of faculty orientation and mentoring programs*

5.4 The program must formulate and begin to implement a faculty evaluation process that establishes goals and assesses performance of each faculty member.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Template of evaluation instruments*

5.5 The program must develop, publish and follow policies and procedures for faculty recruitment and retention, promotion, tenure (where it exists), academic assignments and responsibilities, sabbaticals, reporting relationships, grievances and benefits.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Workload policy*
* *Organizational chart*
* *Procedure and policy manuals*

5.6 The program must demonstrate its efforts to recruit a diverse faculty.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Announcement and publication of open positions*
* *Recruitment plans*

**Standard VI – Students**

6.1 The program must define a fair and impartial process that will result in the admission of students who possess the intelligence, integrity and maturity necessary for them to become competent doctors of optometry.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Recruitment materials*
* *Recruitment plan*
* *Admission policy, criteria and procedures*

6.2 The program must establish the criteria that will be utilized in selecting students who have the potential for success in the program and the profession, and the program must have a plan to publish the criteria.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Admissions criteria*
  + *Prerequisites*
  + *Admissions tests, including minimum acceptable scores*
  + *GPAs*
  + *Interview*
  + *Essays*
  + *Letters of reference*
  + *Deadlines for submission*
  + *Application fees*
* *Draft of catalog*
* *Draft of web site*

6.2.1 The program must have a policy that requires that the accepted applicants have completed all prerequisites and at least an equivalent of three academic years of postsecondary education in an accredited institution prior to beginning the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Admission policy, criteria and procedure*
* *Draft of catalog*

6.3 The program must be prepared to provide information to incoming students regarding pre-matriculation health standards, access to health care, personal counseling, and standards for immunization against infectious disease.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Drafts of publications which describe the above*

6.4 There must be an institutional commitment to serving students, including an organizational element devoted to student affairs with sufficient staffing and resources to meet the needs of applicants and students.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Organizational chart*
* *Description of duties of element devoted to student affairs*
* *Position descriptions of personnel in student affairs*

6.4.1 At a minimum, student services must include financial aid and debt counseling. A plan to provide academic counseling, learning support services, career placement assistance, and access to information technology support must be in place.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Organizational chart*
* *Position description of personnel in student affairs*
* *Student handbook*
* *Draft of Web site*

6.5 The program must have a system in place that will allow it to maintain an orderly, accurate, confidential, secure and permanent system of student records.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Policies on student record access*

6.6 The program’s publications, written policies, advertising, and student recruitment materials must present an accurate representation of the program.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Drafts of publications, written policies, advertising, Web sites*

6.6.1 The program must have developed policies and procedures on academic and professional standards, grading, attendance, disciplinary actions, retention, dismissal and reinstatement, non-discrimination policy, due process, academic calendar, tuition, fees, refund policy, honors, scholarship and awards, and other related matters**,** and the program must have a plan to publish the policies and procedures.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Documents which describe above*
* *Draft of College catalog*
* *Student handbook*
* *Draft of Web site*
* *Copy of the proposed policies and procedures*

6.6.2 The program must have fully developed policies and procedures regarding student grievances that must include maintaining records of receipt, investigation, adjudication and resolution of such complaints, and the program must have a plan to publish these policies and procedures.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Documents which describe above*
  + *Draft of College catalog*
  + *Student handbook*
  + *Draft of Web site*

6.7 Policies must be in place that will allow students access to faculty and administrators of the program.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Organizational structure of student/school interactions*

6.8 Policies must be in place that will allow students opportunities to participate in student governance and other leadership development activities.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Student governance policies*
* *List of proposed student committees*
* *Policies promoting student involvement in program committees*

6.9 The program must have a plan in place to make available to students information on postgraduate educational programs, residencies, and fellowship training opportunities.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Policies or publications which provide information on the above*

**Standard VII – Facilities, Equipment and Resources**

7.1 Prior to Preliminary Approval, teaching, laboratory, and patient care facilities, and related infrastructure for the first year of the curriculum must be in place and be appropriate to fulfill the mission, goals and objectives of the program.

7.1.1 There must also be a written plan for how additional facilities will be completed in time for the subsequent years of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Photos*
* *Architectural drawings*
* *Blueprints*
* *Timeline for completion of additional facilities*

7.1.2 The program must have a plan for how it will provide for the repair, maintenance, and replacement of physical facilities and equipment.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Replacement policies and schedule*
* *Description of available financial resources for equipment repair and replacement*
* *Description of personnel and facilities for equipment and physical facility maintenance and repair*
* *Plans for renovation or acquisition of facilities*
* *Equipment acquisition plans*

7.2 The program must have access to well-maintained library, study space and information facilities, sufficient in size, breadth of holdings, and information technology, to support the program’s education and other missions.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *List of library holdings*
* *Library floor plan*
* *Electronic information resources*
* *Description of information technology*
* *IT support services*
* *Computer and IT resources*

7.3 The program must have access to library and information service staff who will support the needs of the faculty, residents and students of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Hours of library service*
* *Organizational chart for library and information services*
* *Curriculum vitae for key information resources personnel*
* *Information resource services available*

7.4 The program must have an emergency preparedness plan.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Emergency preparedness plan*

**Standard VIII – Clinic Management and Patient Care Policies**

8.1 The program must operate a clinical patient care program sufficient to develop the clinical competencies in Standard 2.8. This clinical patient care program must be primarily staffed by faculty members who are employed by the program. These patient care clinics must be developing at a pace to provide for an adequate caseload in terms of size, variety and scope to support the required clinical experiences necessary to fulfill the mission, goals, and objectives of the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of institution’s clinical patient care program*
* *Description of affiliated clinical patient care programs*
* *Description of patient demographics (if available)*
* *Documentation that each proposed clinical site provides access to physical facilities and appropriate patient populations*
* *Comprehensive plan for patient recruitment.*

8.2 The program must have a coordinated system of clinical governance, administration, management and evaluation in place for clinics operated by the program.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Clinic administration organization chart*
* *Description of clinic administration*
* *Clinic management policies*
* *Procedures for evaluating clinic administrators*
* *Procedures for evaluating effectiveness of clinical operation*
* *Position description(s) for principal administrators of clinical program*

8.2.1 The senior official whose primary responsibility will be administering the clinical program must be in place.

8.2.2 A clinic manual which includes all clinic policies and procedures must be developed, published and accessible to faculty and staff.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Clinic manual*
* *Electronic clinic manual*

8.2.3 The program must verify credentials of faculty members who serve in the clinic(s).

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Faculty credentials*
* *Credentialing process*

8.2.4 The program must define the scope and extent of clinical privileges for each faculty member who serves in the clinic(s).

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of procedures to grant clinical privileges*
* *Completed privileging documents*

8.2.5 The patient record system must allow for efficient review of the patient’s condition and any pertinent previous care provided at the program’s clinical facility.

*Example of Evidence*

* *Samples of written or electronic patient records (on-site)*

8.2.6 The clinic must conduct a continuous quality assessment, improvement and compliance program that provides for remediation when deficiencies are identified.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Description of quality assessment program*
* *Sample evaluation forms of clinic services by staff, patients or students*

8.2.7 The clinic must publish or post policies and procedures on the patient’s rights and responsibilities.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Posted patient bill of rights*
* *Handouts which include patient bill of rights*
* *Publications which include patient bill of rights*
* *Informed consent documents*

8.2.8 The clinic must have written procedures for receiving and resolving patient complaints, grievances and appeals.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Documents with relevant policies*
* *Clinic manual*

8.2.9 Clinic programs must utilize established procedures to address risk management such as liability, security and safety.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Liability policies including professional liability*
* *Security policies*
* *Safety policies*
* *Emergency procedures*
* *Infection control policies*

8.3 The program must provide eye and vision care services which are consistent with accepted and well-established health care standards such as clinical practice guidelines.

*Examples of Evidence*

* *Adopted clinical practice guidelines*
* *Description of access to clinical practice guidelines*
* *Quality assurance program*