

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

## Continuing Competency Program (CCP)

### Information Guide





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# 1. Quality Assurance: Background

## a. Mandate to Protect the Public

The mandate of the College of Opticians of British Columbia (COBC) 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 COBC Vision Statement and Mission Statement in mind:

### COBC Vision Statement

Better health through excellence in opticianry regulation to ensure safe quality vision care for all.

### COBC Mission Statement

Regulating opticians in the public interest. We set and enforce standards and promote best practices for vision care in BC.

## b. Requirement to Administer a Quality Assurance Program

The COBC was established under the Health Professions Act (HPA) in 1994 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 quality assurance program. Quality assurance (QA) programming 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 health care at all times throughout their careers. They meet entry-to-practice competencies when they are first registered and continue to meet various benchmarks and/or constructions of competence as they progress in their career, with the help of QA programming.

## c. 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 QA programs. QA program design enables registrants to sustain and enhance competence, often measuring a minimum of competence regardless of the context of their practice.

### Competencies:

- Provide guidance and direction to the professional and practice setting;
- Establish the essential and minimum expectations of the profession; and
- Provide the overarching founding for the:
  - education benchmark/curriculum,
  - licensing exam,
  - standards of practice, and
  - ongoing competency and competency assessment tools.

***The COBC adopted the National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulator's (NACOR's) competencies, and is using the 3rd edition of these competencies for this program. These competencies can be found on the COBC website, on the "Continuing Competency Program" page.***

## 2. Quality Assurance: A New Program

### a. The New Continuing Competency Program (CCP)

The CCP is a quality assurance tool that enables registrants to sustain and enhance competence within the context of their practice, regardless of the type of practice. It includes a method of competency assessment to support registrants in professional development. The CCP also provides a public protection mechanism to ensure opticians maintain a level of quality practice throughout their careers. The CCP is being launched in phases, first available to those starting a new cycle in 2018, followed by those whose next cycles begin in 2019 and then 2020.

#### Objectives

The objectives of the CCP are to meet the following legislative requirements of the HPA:

- Establish and maintain a QA program to promote high practice standards among registrants;
- Establish, monitor, and enforce standards of professional ethics among registrants;
- Promote and enhance the ability of registrants to respond and adapt to changes in practice environments, advances in technology, and other emerging issues.

Further to the requirements of the HPA, another objective of the CCP is to provide registrants with a useful tool that provides feedback and support for personal professional development. Registrants will benefit greatly from the self-direction allowed within the program, using the tools available to manage their progress and growth.

#### Principles

Certain principles were also established by the British Columbia Health Regulators (BCHR), which help provide a consistent framework and guide for all regulatory programs to follow. The CCP aligns with other health profession QA programs, which:

- 1 Are consistent with the mandate to protect the public,
- 2 Promote high practice standards and maintain safe, ethical, and competent practice,
- 3 Are inclusive and fairly applied to all registrants,
- 4 Provide for assessments and methods appropriate for desired outcomes,
- 5 Provide feedback to guide improvements to practice,
- 6 Are based on standards for safe, ethical, and competent practice (may be described as core competencies, professional standards, or standards of practice),
- 7 Are based on evidence,
- 8 Are outcomes-driven with indicators of program effectiveness,
- 9 Contribute to knowledge evolving in the field,
- 10 Are meaningful for registrants,
- 11 Are feasible and cost-effective for the regulatory body and its registrants, and,
- 12 Protect registrants' confidentiality.



## b. Development

The COBC worked with opticians to create a program that would be useful for opticians to maintain competency and obtain their professional goals. The COBC first gathered feedback from opticians and stakeholders about the existing continuing education program to understand what needed to be changed. Between 2011 and 2017, the COBC collaborated with other optician regulators and opticians across Canada to develop a program that is accessible, cost-efficient, and assists in helping Canadian opticians maintain and continue their competency to better serve and protect the public.

### Development Timeline:

2011	2013	2014	2015- 2016	2017	2018
reviewed QA programs, reports & literature; program development and planning	released 3rd Edition of the National Competencies for Canadian Opticians; feedback from stakeholders on program framework	competency assessment tool blueprint developed	competency assessment tool developed, piloted, and changes implemented	online software application development; support material development; policy development; bylaw amendments	online software piloted; program officially launched for first cycle

## c. Comparing the Previous Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) Program with the CCP

The previous MCE program was focused on credit-based education, which meant that each registrant, depending on their licensure, had to submit a certain number of credits to fulfill their requirements.

Rather than being credit-based, the new CCP is competency-based. The new CCP utilizes an assessment method, learning goals, and reflection to ensure that registrants are maintaining competency throughout their careers. The new CCP directs registrants to focus on competency areas that they may need professional development in, and highlights competency areas they excel in.

Description	OLD MCE	NEW CCP
<b>Cycle Length</b>	3 years	3 years
<b>Assessment Tool</b>	None	Online continuing competency assessment, taken at the start of each cycle
<b>Professional Development</b>	21 credits (optician); 36 credits (optician and contact lens fitter)	Minimum 6 learning goals with a plan for each (completing minimum of 2 per year); reflection
<b>Outcome</b>	Professional growth from time spent on education activities	Professional growth from achieving learning goals towards desired change through focused planning and constant reflection

# 3. The Continuing Competency Program (CCP): the Details

## a. Participation

All licensed opticians in all licensing categories must participate in the CCP, which includes registrants who are registered as non-practicing.

Each registrant is assigned a 3-year continuing education cycle upon licensure. From 2018 forward, each registrant will be assigned a 3-year continuing competency cycle. For ease, current registrants' cycles will remain the same.

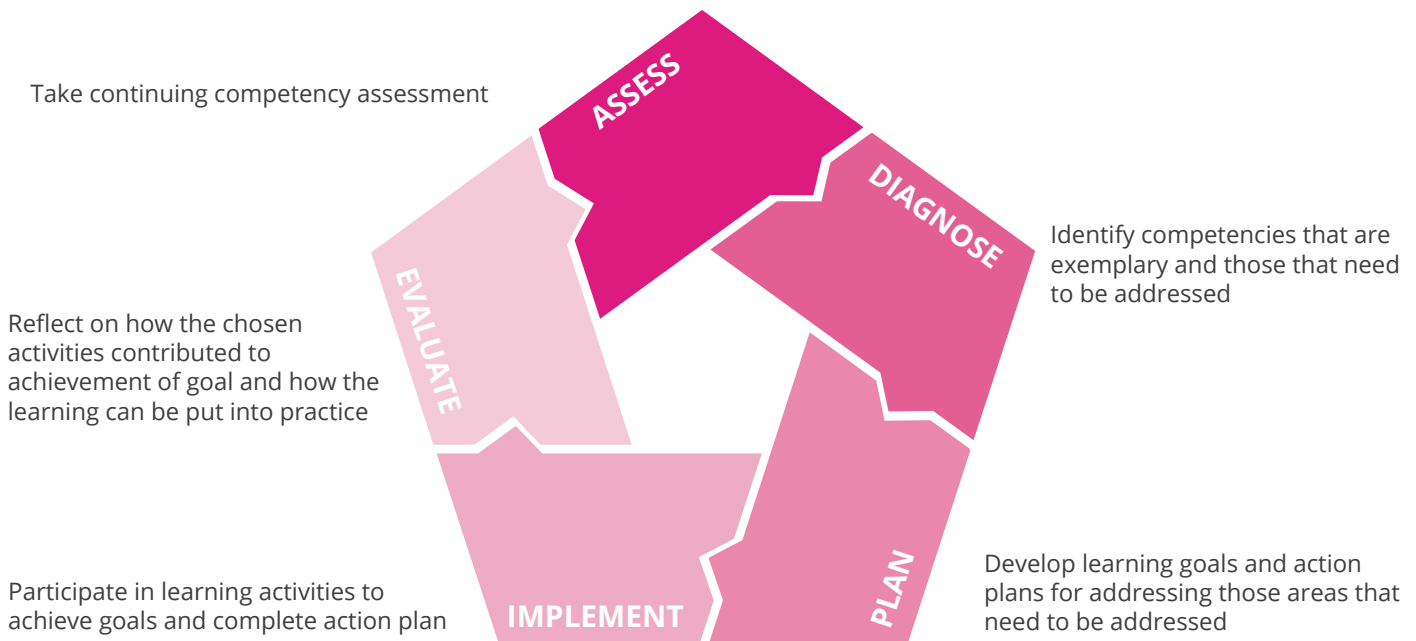
**Example:** Registrant Jane's current 3-year continuing education cycle ends December 31, 2017. Jane's 3-year continuing competency cycle begins January 1, 2018. Jane's continuing competency program requirements will need to be completed when her cycle ends on December 31, 2020.

## b. Process

The process can be broken down into the following 4 steps, which are further detailed below:

- 1 Taking the continuing competency assessment
- 2 Creating learning goals, with learning plans
- 3 Achieving those goals, through planned activities
- 4 Reflecting on learning outcomes

A 3-year cycle can be summed up using a common ADPIE process (Assess, Diagnose, Plan, Implement, Evaluate). The following diagram demonstrates how, in relation to the CCP:





## Step 1: Taking the Continuing Competency Assessment

The continuing competency 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 3-year cycle, every registrant will take the assessment.

The assessment will be housed on the COBC website and can be accessed through the registrant's login. Registrants can complete the assessment from the comfort of their own home, whenever convenient. The assessment consists of the following 4 sections, with a specific amount of time allotted for each:

- 1 An 80-question multiple choice assessment for **Core** competencies (1hr30min)
- 2 A 60-question multiple choice assessment for **Eyeglass** competencies (1hr10min)
- 3 A 50-question multiple choice assessment for **Contact Lens** competencies (1hr)
- 4 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. The assessment is all multiple choice and registrants can review their answers before submitting their completed assessment. Not all assessments need to be completed in one sitting.

For instructions and further tips for taking the assessment, please review the "Instruction Manual: Login & Assessment" document.

**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 **Refraction opticians** will take the additional Refraction assessment.

*(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, please review the 3rd edition of the competency document, found on the "Continuing Competency Program" page of the COBC website.

**Example:** Jane completes the Core section of the assessment, and immediately reviews the following results. This is her competency profile for the Core competencies:

### Core

Competency Domain	Performance
1.0: Assumes Professional Responsibilities	Need to address
2.0: Communication and Collaboration Effectively	Need to address
3.0: Educates and Advocates Effectively	Exemplary
4.0: Applies Organizational Management Principles	Need to address
5.0: Ensures Patient/ Client and Practice Safety	Moderate
6.0: Demonstrates Clinical Knowledge	Exemplary
7.0: Applies Critical Thinking and Professional Judgment	Need to address
8.0: Utilizes Practice Process	Need to address

## 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 3 different performance levels for each domain (each domain has 10 questions aligned to it, within every section):



Even if a registrant scores primarily "Need to address", like in the example above, the registrant will not be suspended. 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 Goals

Registrants will use their assessment results to develop a learning plan which will guide their continuing competency for the 3-year cycle. The Online Learning Plan is a section where each registrant will create their learning goals, and plan, log, and reflect upon their continuing competency activities. The user-friendly interface will assist registrants in managing their own progress through completion.

Registrants will be prompted to pick 6 competencies to work on, identified from their assessment results. These competencies will be the basis for creating a minimum of 6 learning goals over their 3-year cycle, with an aim to complete at least 2 learning goals per year.

**Example:** Jane starts CCP in 2018. After taking the assessment at the start of her cycle and getting her results, she creates 2 goals for 2018, 2 more in 2019, and 2 more to complete her cycle in 2020:

### 3-year cycle, 6 learning goals, starting 2018

Year 1	2018	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals
Year 2	2019	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals
Year 3	2020	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals

### Next 3-year cycle, 6 learning goals, starting 2021

Year 1	2021	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals
Year 2	2022	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals
Year 3	2023	<b>Min.</b> 2 Learning Goals

Registrants are encouraged to complete 2 learning goals in each year of their cycle, in order to ensure they provide themselves with enough time to complete 6 by the end of their cycle. If they are not able to complete 2 each year, they must still ensure they complete 6 in total. Some registrants may find they are able to complete 3 in a year; if that is the case, they will simply be able to add a new section in their plan for a third learning goal in that year.

## Goal Setting

Goal setting is a common and successful technique used by professionals in numerous different fields, including the health care industry. By creating learning goals, registrants can create manageable and focused targets that demonstrate clearly how their continuing competency activities contribute towards their own improvement. These goals are entirely for the personal and professional benefit of registrants' ongoing development and success in their opticianry practice.

To better assist registrants in creating goals, the COBC has chosen the framework of SMART goals.

## Defining SMART Goals

SMART goal setting is a way to create structured and achievable goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for:

**S Specific** – clearly define what you are trying to achieve

**M Measurable** – criteria to know when you have achieved goal

**A Action-oriented** – action to achieve goal is clear

**R Realistic** – make sure it is attainable and reasonable

**T Time-bound** – set a definite deadline

The aim of SMART goals is to create realistic goals that produce an outcome. Often when setting goals, people will think big and get discouraged if they don't meet their goals. While the COBC encourages our registrants to think big, we also want to ensure registrants are creating achievable goals with practical results. The process is not meant to be daunting or overwhelming.

All registrants must complete a minimum of 6 learning goals within their 3-year cycle, no matter the results of their assessment. Even if a registrant scores exemplary in all competencies, there is always room for growth. COBC encourages registrants to find new avenues to learn and build on their pre-existing strengths as well as their weaknesses.

## Creating SMART Goals

Tips for setting SMART goals and action plan learning activities:

Your goal should be:	Some guidance:	Questions to think about:
<b>Specific</b>	Create learning goals and action plans that are specific and clear. Make them detailed enough to clearly define what you are trying to achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I want to achieve?</li> <li>• What specific knowledge/skill do I need?</li> </ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	Establish tangible criteria so that you will know when you have achieved each goal and action plan strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much?</li> <li>• How often?</li> <li>• How many?</li> <li>• How will I demonstrate that I have accomplished the goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Action-oriented</b>	Stating the desired outcome of each goal and action item makes them more clear and understandable. It also increases motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the ultimate outcome I want?</li> <li>• How will achieving my goal improve my practice?</li> </ul>
<b>Realistic</b>	Make sure the goals and action items you set are attainable and reasonable, including the cost and time required to complete each action item. Consider whether the goal and associated action plan is substantial enough to meet your learning requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it attainable?</li> <li>• What can I do to make it realistic?</li> <li>• Have I selected appropriate educational strategies to help me achieve my learning goals?</li> </ul>
<b>Time-bound</b>	Simply deciding when you want to achieve something can be a good motivator. Time must be measurable, attainable and realistic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When will I achieve this?</li> <li>• Have I established realistic deadlines to achieve my goals and action plan items?</li> </ul>

Learning goals (SMART or not) can fall under a specific or many categories, including professional obligations, communication, administration, clinical practice, and so on. Starting with a category or a competency can facilitate brainstorming on what to accomplish, and the results of the continuing competency assessment will point to the competencies where there are potential areas of improvement. Therefore, registrants will have a good starting point to help with their learning goal creation.



By following the SMART goal setting structure, a SMART goal could look something like what is presented below:

**Example:** Jane has finished the assessments, and her results show which competencies she needs to address. For her first goal, she has chosen to focus on Core competency “1.0 - Assumes Professional Responsibilities.” She creates this first goal to improve in that area, and decides on an action plan:

Competency	Learning Goal
Core competency 1.0 - Assumes Professional Responsibilities  <i>(For this example, Jane has chosen to focus on the following, more specific competency domain: 1.3 Prepare documents and records in accordance with provincial legislation, standards, and guidelines)</i>	By December 2018, I will update my patient record system to electronic records in accordance with professional standards
Action Plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will review the COBC's standards and complete the COBC's education module on record keeping by May 2018</li> <li>• I will research electronic record and patient management systems that align with regulatory requirements by June 2018</li> <li>• I will have a session with my business coach to prepare for system implementation with staff and patients by August 2018</li> <li>• I will attend a communications and marketing class to advertise the new online system to patients by September 2018</li> <li>• I will adopt a new electronic record system, update website, and import patient files by October 2018</li> <li>• I will pilot the new system with staff before launching it to patients by November 2018</li> <li>• I will make any changes from the pilot and implement the new system by December 2018</li> </ul>	

In the example goal created above, the goal is SMART:

**Specific** - the registrant is clear about what they want to achieve, and why.

**Measurable** - she will be able to determine whether she updated the system or not.

**Action - oriented** - it requires her to take action, and plan activities to accomplish the goal.

**Realistic** - it is attainable for her, as she has chosen activities that consider her budget and availability.

**Time-bound** - it states the particular date in mind for completing the goal.

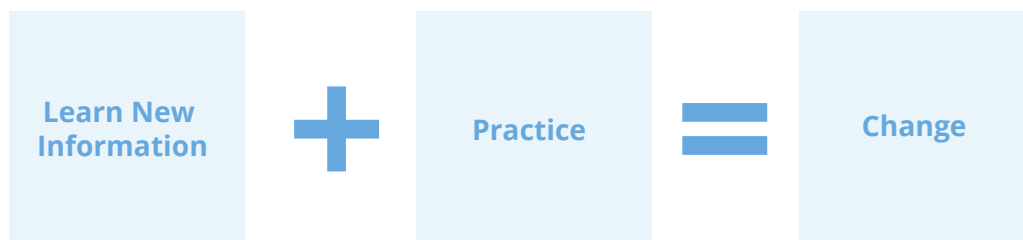
SMART goals do not need to look exactly like the above, and there are other formats. You may wish to seek out other ideas online or access our more extensive “SMART Goals: Guidelines & Examples” document for more information and examples.

### Step 3: Making a Plan

In order 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 That Will Help Achieve Goals

When choosing activities, registrants will want to find opportunities that will add something to their existing knowledge and skillset, or something brand new that will ultimately contribute to a change in their practice.



#### Types of Activities and Continuing Education

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. However, credits won't be necessary, nor do they need to be submitted to the COBC. Rather, what should be submitted is the information on how the course/continuing education will enable the accomplishment of the goal.

In the example above, registrant Jane has decided to take a communications and marketing class. This activity directly relates back to her SMART goal - she feels it will help her learn how to communicate and implement the new system to patients, it is time-bound, and she can complete it within her schedule.

#### Using the Online System

The Online Learning Plan will contain a list of some current activities that may be of interest for registrants. Those activities will be aligned with the competencies from the assessment, so registrants will therefore be able to see any known activities that would relate to their goal and improving a specific competency.

While the COBC will try and keep an updated list of known activities available, registrants are very much encouraged to think more broadly about how they could learn and seek out new opportunities. Here are just some types of common learning activities to consider and explore:

Study clubs	Textbooks	Seminars
Conferences	Mentorship	Webinars
Online videos	Shadowing	Interviewing
Journals	Authoritative websites	Role-playing

## Step 4: Achieving Learning Goals

Achieving the goals through learning activities is crucial to the CCP process, self-learning, and reflective practice. Achieving learning goals will be different for every person, as those (SMART) goals and the activities chosen will vary for each person. Some registrants may plan to complete a year-long course that pertains to their goal, while others may plan to work with a mentor, read some textbooks, and watch some online videos to accomplish a similar goal.

Registrants will continue to make their own choices and decisions regarding continuing education activities and are encouraged to find activities that fully encompass the competencies they need to address. It is up to each registrant to determine the necessary amount of time spent on each activity that best suits their individual learning needs.

Upon the completion of certain activities, registrants are also encouraged to upload any documents or information to their online plan, to show their participation/completion of those activities. This will help the COBC when reviewing registrant programs, should there be any questions.



## Value of Achievement

Completing the activities as planned will determine whether the desired learning has been accomplished, and the appropriate steps have been taken to further develop the desired competency.

Accomplishing goals can result in big changes - achieving each goal provides something new and important on its own, but collectively, achieving several goals will provide something far greater. Continuing one's competency as time passes is the objective, and many people feel more motivated each time a goal is reached. Working through new goals can bring a larger focus, so registrants will want to ask themselves some questions as they make progress: What big change do they want to work towards? What kind of professional do they want to be?

Personal and professional development can help bring a greater sense of enjoyment in one's daily work, and a renewed sense of commitment to the profession.

## Step 5: 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?

**Example:** After creating her goal earlier in the year, with a plan to achieve it, it is now December 2018 and Jane has finished the activities she had planned. Jane logs back in to her online program to reflect on her learning, and 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.

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

- 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?

## Step 6: Submitting Continuing Competency Requirements

Once a registrant has completed the activities in their learning plan and 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 3-year cycle, registrants must have completed 6 goals, submitted for completion and review, online.

## Auditing by the College

The COBC will randomly audit registrants' QA accounts throughout the program to ensure they are supported with SMART goal creation, and that their activities are in alignment with their goals. The COBC will also 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. This also allows the COBC 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 competency is important for everyone, in every profession. The COBC 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 COBC encourages anyone who might need it to contact the office for additional assistance or guidance, at any point throughout their cycle.

*For more information, you may also wish to review the "Frequently Asked Questions" document, found on the COBC website.*

In accordance with the Health Professions Act, information collected from registrants during the CCP may only be used for the purpose of QA. The CCP is not intended to be a punitive process, but rather a means to help registrants maintain and increase the quality of opticianry in B.C.



## Introduction

The National Alliance of Canadian Optician Regulators (NACOR) has developed its third edition of *National Competencies for Canadian Opticians*. It replaces the second edition, which was published in April 2007.

NACOR is a federation of the optician regulatory bodies of nine Canadian provinces, excluding Quebec. Its goals are to develop quality benchmarks for accreditation standards and processes for opticianry; and to monitor and investigate common issues related to the accreditation and mobility of opticians, both nationally and internationally. Coordinating the development, validation and revision of national competencies is one of NACOR's primary projects. NACOR undertook a third edition of *National Competencies for Canadian Opticians* to ensure that the competencies are relevant and reflect current Canadian opticianry practice.

To meet the increased public demand for competence and accountability, national competencies are required to measure and evaluate safe and ethical professional practice. NACOR and the provincial optician regulatory bodies recognize the importance of establishing national competencies to define the minimum expectations for opticianry practice in Canada and support the evaluation of opticianry knowledge, skill, judgment and attributes. National competencies are the foundation for entry requirements, registration with the provincial regulatory bodies, continuing competence programs and the determination of professional misconduct or incompetence.

## Background

Competence is more than knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. In addition, competence is the ability to perform a job properly by demonstrating the required knowledge, skill, judgment and attitude.

"Competency-based approaches to training, assessment, and professional development are increasingly viewed as a central strategy for improving the effectiveness of those who provide care." (Anne F. Marrlli, 2005) . 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. The performance of most tasks requires the simulation or sequenced demonstration of multiple competencies." (Anne F. Marrlli, 2005).

The national competencies set out the practice expectations for when an optician is functioning in a particular role, performing a skill or managing a situation, and when working with colleagues, other health professionals, patients/clients or the public. Opticians are expected to demonstrate the competencies to ensure safe and professional practice. It is expected that those applying for registration or licensing as an optician will demonstrate the core competencies, and that practising opticians will assume responsibility for maintaining the competencies specific to their practice and role.

Competencies:

- provide guidance and direction to the professional and practice setting;
- establish the essential competencies and minimum expectations of the profession; and
- provide the **overarching foundation** for the:
  - education benchmark/curriculum,
  - licensing exam,
  - standards of practice, and
  - ongoing competency and competency assessment tools.

## Competency Development

To develop the third edition of *National Competencies for Canadian Opticians*, NACOR held a series of focus groups across Canada. The 32 practising opticians who participated in the focus groups identified competencies in the second edition that are not relevant, no longer current, redundant, or required clarification and revision. They also identified opticianry knowledge, skill, judgment and attributes that are absent in the second edition.

The data from the focus groups informed the development of the outline and item-writing process of the third edition. A steering committee of practising opticians, regulators and opticianry educators from across Canada then established the competency framework and competency outline based on national and international source materials, including provincial standards, guidelines, regulations and legislation; opticianry competencies from the United Kingdom, as well as competencies from other Canadian health professions.

To validate the national competencies, NACOR conducted an online national survey. One thousand, one hundred and eight-five (n=1185) opticians responded to the survey. A total of six hundred and twelve (612) opticians responded to all survey questions. The national survey data identified competencies requiring clarification and confirmed competencies were highly representative of opticianry practice. The analysis also identified competencies that are not found to be essential to practice.

The national validation report provided the following key recommendations based on the survey data and comments:

1. Some competency statements and performance indicators require clarification.
2. Highly related competencies should be reexamined to determine if they should be combined.
3. Identify why some performance indicators were ranked as low priority and/or as performed infrequently.

The steering committee reviewed the recommendations and data to make modifications to the competencies. Specifically wording was clarified and low ranking performance indicators were examined for exclusion as a "core" competency. Highly related competencies were combined.

## National Competency Framework

There are several approaches to competency frameworks, including those based on tasks, function analysis and a description of roles. NACOR applied a functional analysis approach to the development of the national competencies.

"A common approach is to identify several 'core' or 'key' competencies that are essential for all, and then identify several additional categories of competencies that apply specific to a subgroup." (Anne F Marrlli, 2005) The national competencies describe these two sets of competencies as "core" and "focus areas." *The National Competencies for Canadian Opticians, 3rd edition* framework recognizes eight core competencies and four focus areas. The core competencies describe the ethical, professional and effective functions of opticianry practice that all opticians must demonstrate. The focus areas recognize that opticians concentrate their learning, skill and knowledge to particular practice areas.

The competencies and performance indicators in the third edition must be applied and interpreted in light of the requirements of the optician's unique practice context and particular situation. Not all competencies in the third edition apply to all opticians in all practice environments. Nor do all performance indicators need to be demonstrated by all opticians. The framework also takes into consideration the slight difference in licensing an optician as a contact lens fitter across Canada and the focus areas of refracting and low vision.

National statistics, April 2013

Registered Opticians	Eyeglasses	Contact Lenses	Refracting	CL/Refracting	Total # of Members
British Columbia	384	451	83	231	1149
Alberta	633	216	39		982
Saskatchewan	173	60			265
Manitoba	159	105			299
Ontario	2552	2552	42		2552
New Brunswick	121	45			214
Nova Scotia	241	52			302
PEI	33	8			41
Newfoundland	80	43			123
Total					5927

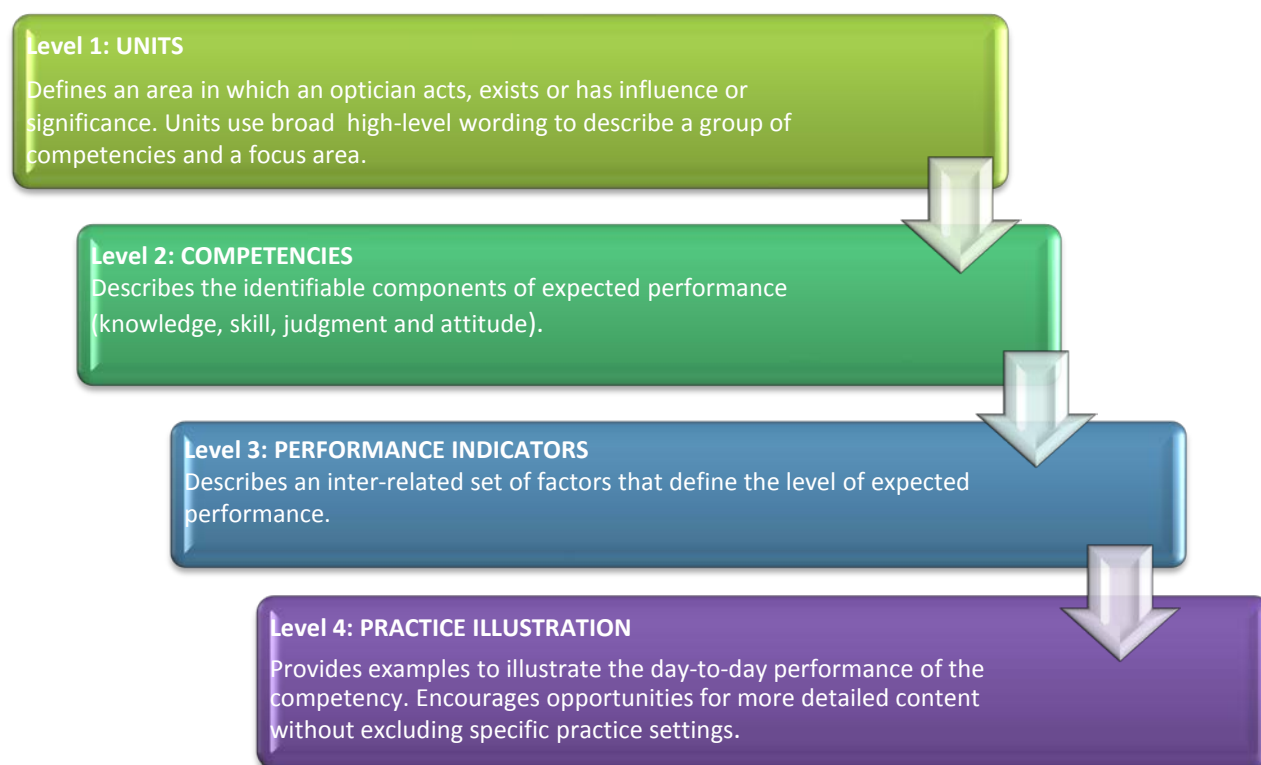
Unit	Core Competencies
1	Assumes professional responsibilities
2	Communicates and collaborates effectively
3	Educates and advocates effectively
4	Applies organizational management principles
5	Ensures patient/client and practice safety
6	Demonstrates clinical knowledge
7	Applies critical thinking and professional judgment
8	Utilizes practice processes

Unit	Focus Areas
9	Eyeglasses
10	Contact lenses
11	Refraction
12	Low vision

Each competency is a defined behaviour that provides a structured guide to identify, evaluate and develop an optician's behaviours. Competencies move expectations beyond demonstrated knowledge and a skill list to demonstrated knowledge, skill, judgment and professional attitudes. Each competency is linked to a set of performance indicators.

Performance indicators are action statements that describe how a competency is applied or demonstrated in practice, and provide a way to measure competence. The national competencies present practice illustrations to provide practice examples for each performance indicator and suggest relevance to practice.

The figure below defines the competency framework's interconnecting levels.



## Works Cited

Anne F. Marrlli, J. T. (2005). Strategies for Developing Competency Models. *Administration and Policy in Mental health*, 32 (May/June), 533.

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