

FAQs -Proposal to Accept National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) Examination as an Alternate Standards Assessment for the purposes of Registration

Why is the College proposing to accept the NBEO examination as an alternate standards assessment for registration purposes?

The College has proposed to accept the NBEO exam to improve choice, accessibility and flexibility for applicants seeking registration with the College. Approving an alternate exam will provide applicants with the option to take either the Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) examination or the NBEO examination to fulfill this registration requirement. Applicants may choose the assessment that suits their own personal situation and timetable. When considering this proposal, Council must be satisfied that the NBEO examination is valid, reliable and defensible and that it assesses entry level competencies to ensure that applicants who have successfully challenged the exam will provide safe, quality optometric care to the public of Ontario.

Is the College committed to ensuring that there will be an entry to practice option that can be challenged in its entirety in Canada and that is available in both English and French?

Yes, the College is committed to ensuring that an exam is available for candidates to challenge in both official languages and that can be taken, in its entirety, in Canada.

Do Canadian students studying in the US have to write both the NBEO exam and OEBC exam in order to register in Ontario?

According to a survey conducted in late 2017 by the US-based Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), of the 21 US schools surveyed, only 2 required its students to challenge all three sections of the NBEO exam for graduation, and six other schools required students to take either Part I or Parts I and II in order to graduate; it is important to note that the requirement is not necessarily to have passed these parts of the exam. Currently, Ontario accepts only the OEBC exam, so graduates of these schools, would have to take both (at least some parts of) the NBEO to graduate and then successfully challenge the OEBC exam to register with the College. If Council approves the NBEO examination, then graduates from these schools need only successfully complete the NBEO exam in its entirety, or the OEBC exam, in order to register in Ontario.

Since the College is responsible for setting registration requirements, do you see accepting the NBEO exam as handing over the responsibility of registration to another country?

No, the standards assessment is only one of many requirements that must be fulfilled by an applicant in order to register to practise optometry in Ontario. In addition, the College is not proposing to solely rely on the NBEO as it will continue to accept the OEBC exam and review it on an annual basis.

Will the College have oversight over the NBEO exam? What is NBERC?

Under Section 22.4 (2) of the *Health Professions Procedural Code (HPPC)*, the College is required, if it relies on a third party to assess qualifications, to take reasonable measures to ensure that the third party makes the assessment in a way that is transparent, objective, impartial and fair. The College therefore, oversees any third party it uses for assessment.

Oversight of the NBEO examination is provided by a committee of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO), of which the College is a member. The committee is called the National Board of Examiners Review Committee (NBERC) and it reports to ARBO annually. NBERC's members are made up of representatives of 6 members of ARBO (this would be 6 states and/or provincial boards of optometry). In 2018, the Registrar of the College of Optometrists of British Columbia sat on the NBERC committee.