



**Commission on Opticianry Accreditation**

## **PROGRAM SELF-STUDY**

The process to follow for initial accreditation  
or reaffirmation of accreditation.

# STEPS TO ACCREDITATION

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# APPLICATION

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Choose potential dates for the on-site visit:

- × For initial accreditation: plan the on-site visit for 4-6 months from when you start this process.
- × For reaffirmation of accreditation: dates should be in the semester/term when the current accreditation expires.
- × The on-site visitors will have to be able to talk to:
  - Students
  - Faculty
  - Administration
  - Advisory Committee

# APPLICATION

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- ✘ Fill out the application that is available on-line at <http://www.coaccreditation.com/application-dispensing.pdf>
- ✘ Have the application signed by the Institution CEO/President.
- ✘ Send it to the Director of Accreditation. You do not owe any money at this time.

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

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- ✘ The Director of Accreditation will begin selecting a team to attend the on-site based on the dates that you have indicated.
- ✘ Once the team is chosen the Director of Accreditation will inform you of the dates for your on-site.
- ✘ You will receive a bill for \$500 for initial accreditation fee or \$250 for reaffirmation of accreditation fee. This fee will be payable no later than 30 days before the scheduled on-site.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Start with a new word processing document.
- ✘ Go to the Commission website and download the current version of the *Essentials of an Accredited Educational Program for Opticianry*  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/essentials-dispensing.pdf> .
- ✘ “Select” starting with page 5, where **Section I. Institution** starts, through page 21, **Section VII. Continuing Program Evaluation**.
- ✘ Paste the selected pages from the *Essentials* into your new document.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Start with **Section I. A.** Bold or italicize the *Essentials* text and not your answer, so that it will be obvious what part of the text is the requirement and what part is your answer.
- ✘ After the dialogue with the requirement for this section, write 1-2 paragraphs of introduction to the institution, including the name of the agency that accredits the institution.
- ✘ Indicate where in the Exhibits a copy of the institution accreditation certificate or letter can be found.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Start a new page with Section I. B. at the top, (bold or italicized as with Section I. A.) and then write a brief introduction to your program.
- ✘ If this is an initial accreditation, include the date that the program started and when the first class graduated.
- ✘ If this is a reaffirmation of accreditation, include the date of the current accreditation period.
- ✘ Indicate where in the Exhibits the documentation for the program startup or current accreditation are.

## PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Start a new page, bold or italicize the text for Section II and A, Mission.
- ✘ Type in the mission of the program. Refer to the Exhibit containing the document where the mission is published and available to the students.
- ✘ If published on-line, include a link to the program website and indicate what hyperlinks to click to get to it.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Continue this way through the whole of the *Essentials*.
- ✘ This dialogue document will probably be 30-60 pages long.
- ✘ Include documentation for everything in your Exhibits, which will likely be a separate binder that is several inches thick.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Do not include in the Exhibits documents that violate confidentiality.
- ✘ If the team needs to see documents of this type they will ask for them during the on-site.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ The self-study typically takes several months to complete.
- ✘ You will need at a minimum:
  - + 4 complete paper copies, one for each of the three team members and one for your files;
  - + 1 complete electronic copy of both the dialogue and the exhibits for the COA office files.
- ✘ The copies **MUST** be in the hands of the team members and the COA office 30 days before the on-site begins. This is not a postmark deadline, it is a possession deadline.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ You will mail the paper copies directly to the on-site team members. The COA Director will send you the team member's addresses.
- ✘ You will mail a CD or small USB device (such as a flash drive) to the COA office with a complete electronic copy.
- ✘ For the electronic copy of documents such as the institution catalogue, if it is not already in electronic form, scan the front page and any pages referenced in the dialogue (such as admission policy, grievance policy, tuition and refund policy, etc.).

## PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ As you write your dialogue, pay particular attention to statements that contain “must”. Make certain that you address each statement that includes this word.
- ✘ Statements that contain “should” or “it is recommended” should also be addressed, but they do not carry the same imperative that the “must” statements have.

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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- ✘ Make it as easy as possible for the team members to find everything. For example:
  - + Number the exhibits in the order that they appear in the self-study dialogue.
  - + Where there are lists of requirements, such as the profession related content in Section III. A., in your dialogue indicate in which course each item can be found. Do not make the team members look up each one in your curriculum, tell them where to find each one.
  - + Number the pages of the dialogue!

# PREPARE SELF-STUDY

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## × REMEMBER:

The team members ARE going to read every word.

The team members ARE going to look for each exhibit, and for documentation for the “must” statements.

The team members are volunteers!

Make their job as easy as possible.

# WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

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- ✘ You make reservations for the team members for Sunday – Tuesday nights for initial accreditation visits, or Sunday – Monday nights for reaffirmation of accreditation visits.
- ✘ You look over the sample agenda for the 2-3 days and schedule time for the on-site team to talk to the students, opticianry faculty, administration, Advisory Committee, librarian, admissions personnel, counseling center, . . .

# HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ Plan a place for the in-briefing (the team, you, the institution administration) and the out-briefing (same people).
- ✘ Reserve a place at the school where the team can meet privately and where they will be able to leave laptops, coats, notes, etc. while they are observing clinics, classes, touring the school.
- ✘ The room for the team should be off-limits to anyone but the team during the time of the on-site visit (but certainly may be used for meetings that include the team).

# HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ Plan for lunch for each day of the on-site.
- ✘ You can plan a meeting around each lunch (for example, the Advising Committee might come for one lunch and then meet with the team after lunch).
- ✘ If the lunch is to be a meeting as well, plan the meeting for after lunch, not during it, to give the team a break from the meetings.

# HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ The Program Director is not invited to the meetings with the faculty, students, administration, etc.
- ✘ The team must meet with each of:
  - + First year students
  - + Second year students
  - + Faculty
  - + Advising Committee
  - + Administration
  - + Librarian (or resource center)

# HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ The team must observe:
  - + A class lecture (an opticianry class)
  - + The dispensing clinic
  - + The finishing laboratory
  - + The contact lens clinic
- ✘ The team may also ask to visit an externship, particularly for distance learning programs.

# HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ At the out-briefing the team will tell you the basics of what has been determined. There will likely be items listed such as:
  - + Program strengths
  - + Program weaknesses, or suggestions
  - + Potential Compliances with the *Essentials*
  - + Non Compliances with the *Essentials*

What does that mean?

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✘ A Non Compliance (NC) with the *Essentials* means that there is a “must” statement that is not met.

+ This may range from something that you can change before the team gets to the airport to something that will take a year to change.

+ NCs do not automatically mean that your program will not be accredited! They are items that must be brought into compliance with the *Essentials*.

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- ✘ A Potential Compliance (PC) with the *Essentials* means that there is a “must” statement that is partially met and partially not met.
    - + To be a PC the item must be fixable within six months.
    - + Something that is partially met and partially not met but that will take longer to meet than six months will be listed as a Non-Compliance.

## HOST ON-SITE VISIT

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- ✘ There will be no discussion of the findings during the out-briefing. The opportunity for discussion will come after you receive the report from the on-site visit.
- ✘ The out-briefing typically takes 5-10 minutes.
- ✘ The team leaves for the airport.
- ✘ The Program Director heaves a long, heartfelt, well deserved sigh of relief that this part is over, and gets back to the normal job of training opticians!

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

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- ✘ The on-site team Chair will prepare a report.
- ✘ The report is due to the Commission office in 30 days from the end of the on-site visit.
- ✘ The report will be reviewed by the other team members and any revisions requested will be made.
- ✘ The report will be sent to you by the Director of Accreditation within 60 days of the end of the on-site visit.

# WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

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- ✘ You will receive a bill for the out-of-pocket expenses of the on-site team.
  - + The Commission will have reimbursed the team for these expenses, and your institution will reimburse the Commission.
  - + It is hoped that as many expenses as possible are paid directly by the school: typically the hotel and lunches are paid directly.

# RESPOND TO ON-SITE REPORT

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- ✘ The report that you receive will be in two parts:
  1. The dialogue will describe the basics of your program by section. Much of this dialogue may be copied directly from your self-study. Strengths, suggestions, PCs, and NCs will be listed in the section of the dialogue where they occurred.
  2. There will be a summary section that restates only the strengths, suggestions, PCs, and NCs.
- ✘ The report is usually 10-15 pages long.

# RESPOND TO ON-SITE REPORT

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- ✘ You will have 45 days from receipt of the report to respond to it.
- ✘ You must respond to every PC and NC, telling how you have fixed it or propose to fix it.
- ✘ Start a word-processing document with the summary pages from the on-site report. Put your response to each PC and NC after that item in the summary pages. Put your response to any suggestions or recommendations that you choose to respond to in the summary pages also.
- ✘ Your response is typically 2-5 pages long.

# RESPOND TO ON-SITE REPORT

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- ✘ You may respond to any suggestions. These do not have to be fixed, but they are suggested because the team considers them ways to further strengthen your program and they should be considered in that context.
- ✘ You do not have to wait until you receive the report to begin the process of ‘fixing’ the PCs and NCs. That is why there is an out-briefing: this way you have potentially 3.5 months to make any changes necessary.

## WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

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- ✘ The on-site summary and the response that you send will be presented to the full Commission at the next semi-annual COA meeting.
- ✘ The Commissioner who is responsible for presenting your program to the Commission will give a brief overview of your program, and will review verbally your response to each PC and NC.

# WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

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- ✘ The Commissioner who presents the program to the COA will indicate the on-site team's recommendation of accreditation or not accreditation. If the team recommended accreditation, then they will also have recommended a term of years (no more than six).
- ✘ The Commissioners will discuss the items, the program response, and the team's recommendation.
- ✘ The Commissioners will vote on the recommendation.

## WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

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- ✘ Within 30 days after the COA semi-annual meeting you will receive a letter from the Director of Accreditation with the decision of the Commissioners.
- ✘ A decision to accredit may include the request that you prepare a progress report, to continue follow-up of any item that the Commissioners determined was not yet in compliance with the *Essentials*.

# POTENTIALLY HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

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- ✘ Listing of all publicly available COA documents:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/page-index.shtml>
- ✘ *Essentials* for the Degree program:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/essentials-dispensing.pdf>
- ✘ Application for accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/application-dispensing.pdf>
- ✘ Accreditation Guide for the degree program:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/accreditation-guide-dispensing.pdf>

# POTENTIALLY HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

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- ✘ Self Study Guide:

<http://www.coaccreditation.com/self-study-guide.pdf>

- ✘ Safety and Environmental Checklist (for your use if your institution does not have one):

<http://www.coaccreditation.com/safety-and-environmental-checklist-table-form.doc>

- ✘ Evaluators Checklist (what the on-site team will use):

<http://www.coaccreditation.com/Evaluators-Checklist.pdf>

- ✘ Evaluator's Workshop (in case you want to see what we told the team members):

<http://www.coaccreditation.com/workshop.shtml>

# POTENTIALLY INTERESTING DOCUMENTS

- ✘ Listing of NOT publicly linked materials
  - + Sample self-study: (feel free to download and use it)  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/sample-self-study.doc>
  - + Sample on-site report:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/sample-on-site-report.doc>
  - + Student questionnaire:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/student-questionnaire.pdf>
  - + Faculty questionnaire:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/faculty-questionnaire.pdf>
  - + Advisory Committee questionnaire:  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/advisory-questionnaire.pdf>

# POTENTIALLY INTERESTING DOCUMENTS

- ✘ Listing of NOT publicly linked materials
  - + Sample 2-day reaffirmation of accreditation agenda  
(feel free to download and use it)  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/agenda-2-day.doc>
  - + Sample 3-day reaffirmation of accreditation agenda  
(feel free to download and use it)  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/agenda-3-day.doc>
  - + Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest documents  
that will be signed by all team members :  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/confidentiality.pdf>  
<http://www.coaccreditation.com/onsite/conflict.pdf>

# THANK YOU FOR READING THIS PRESENTATION.

Do not hesitate to contact the Director of Accreditation with any questions at:

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