

ESSENTIALS OF AN ACCREDITED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR OPTICIANRY

Initially adopted 1974
Revised 1978, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997,
1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2008
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2024, address change 2025:
Effective January 2026

Essentials present the minimum accreditation standards for an educational program. *Essentials* are qualitative requirements stated in broad terms, designed to promote program stability, yet accommodate reasonable variations. The extent to which a program complies with the standards determines its accreditation status. The *Essentials*, therefore, include all requirements for which an accredited program is held accountable. Guidelines and explanatory statements, which clarify the *Essentials*, are enclosed in parentheses. A guideline is not a standard but provides an example and clarification to assist in interpreting the *Essentials*.

PREAMBLE

SCOPE of accreditation for the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

The Commission on Opticianry Accreditation (COA) accredits two-year Opticianry degree programs in the United States that are sponsored by post-secondary institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the Department of Education or CHEA.

MISSION of the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

To foster excellence and innovation in opticianry education by setting standards, assessing educational effectiveness, and identifying those academic programs that meet and exceed the standards, to aid programs to produce competent graduates who will provide professional services to the public.

OBJECTIVES of the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

The Opticianry profession cooperates to establish, maintain, and promote standards of quality for educational Opticianry Programs and provide recognition for those educational programs that meet or exceed the minimum standards specified in these *Essentials*.

These *Essentials* are to be used in the development and self-evaluation of Opticianry Programs. The evaluation of a program's compliance is accomplished by site team visits. Lists of accredited programs are published for the information of the public, prospective students, and employers.

SECTION OVERVIEW

Section I of the Essentials (page 4) constitutes the eligibility requirements for accreditation. Sections II – VII (pages 4 – 18) constitute the standards that the accredited program must meet. Section VIII (pages 18 - 19) constitutes the requirements for maintaining accreditation.

Table of Contents

PREAMBLE	1
SCOPE of accreditation for the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation	1
MISSION of the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation	1
OBJECTIVES of the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation	1
SECTION OVERVIEW	1
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSION	3
ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS	4
I. INSTITUTION	4
II. PROGRAM	4
III. CURRICULUM	6
IV. RESOURCES	9
V. STUDENTS	15
VI. OPERATIONAL POLICIES	17
VII. CONTINUING PROGRAM EVALUATION	18
VIII. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION	18
ACCREDITATION ADMINISTRATION	20

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSION

Opticians are broadly defined as those individuals who adapt and fit corrective eyewear/vision aids, as prescribed by the Ophthalmologist or Optometrist.

Upon completion of the program the Optician should, at the minimum, be able to:

- Discuss prescription eyewear/vision aids and other patient/customer related information, verbal and written, with the prescriber
- Analyze and interpret prescriptions
- Communicate effectively with diverse patient/customer population
- Identify the human eye structure, function, and pathology
- Recommend appropriate frame and lens selections based on the prescription and visual needs
- Determine patient/customer physiognomic (facial and eye) measurements
- Neutralize lenses and verify eyewear/vision aids prescriptions
- Adapt and fit corrective eyewear/vision aids
- Apply rules and regulations for equipment safety
- Demonstrate proficiency in the operation and function of equipment
- Maintain patient/customer records
- Demonstrate skills in business related areas
- Demonstrate skills in record maintenance, frame and lens inventory, supply, and equipment maintenance, and third-party forms
- Dispense, fit, and evaluate eyewear
- Dispense and fit contact lenses, when allowed by regulation
- Dispense and fit artificial eyes and low vision aids, if appropriate
- Demonstrate troubleshooting techniques and adjusting eyewear
- Validate knowledge of applicable regulations
- Fabricate prescription eyewear

ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

I. INSTITUTION

- A. The institution offering the program must be accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized either by the US Department of Education (USDE) or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). In Opticianry Programs which have academic and clinical phases provided in more than one institution, both institutions must be accredited.

The institution granting the degree must be responsible for ensuring that assigned student activities, both on and off campus, are aligned with student learning objectives.

- B. The Opticianry Program must have been in operation for at least two academic years, or the equivalent, and have graduated at least one class. Graduates of the program must be awarded a degree appropriate to Opticianry.

For initial accreditation of new programs, if a letter of intent to seek accreditation is filed within the first year of the program and an on-site evaluation is made within one (1) year of the graduation of the program's first class, that first graduating class is eligible for retroactive accreditation.

For initial accreditation of an existing program, accreditation will include the graduating class immediately prior to the date the accreditation is granted.

II. PROGRAM

Goals refer to those long-range purposes or aims, which the program must sustain year after year. Goals define those end results to be achieved. Goals taken collectively constitute the mission of the program. Learning objectives refer to those relatively short-term conditions to be achieved within a given period of time, which is measurable evidence of progress toward achievement of the program's goals. The Mission, Goals, and Learning Objectives must be published and available to the students.

A. Mission

The program must have a clearly stated mission, which is appropriate for Opticianry.

B. Goals

1. The program must have clearly stated goals, which are appropriate for Opticianry.
2. A goal of the program must be successful completion of the American Board of Opticianry Examination, National Contact Lens Examination, and state licensing examination (if applicable).

C. Learning Objectives

The program must have clearly stated competency-based learning objectives, which are appropriate for Opticianry.

D. Review

Statements of mission, goals, and learning objectives must be reviewed annually and revised when necessary.

1. The reviews must determine whether stated mission, goals, and learning objectives are relevant; whether mission, goals, and learning objectives are being fulfilled, whether the mission, goals, and learning objectives are understood adequately by all those involved; and whether the mission, goals, and learning objectives should be modified based on experience.
2. A documented annual review of mission, goals, and learning objectives must include students, faculty members, administrators, and members of the Advisory Board.
3. The college maintains a documented review process to ensure the appropriateness of the instructional resources and technology being used to meet the program's objectives.

E. Program Outcomes

The program must evaluate outcomes through a systematic plan for assessing program effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance by achieving specific minimum performance standards with respect to:

1. Program completion
2. Job placement/transfer to senior institution
3. National Opticianry Competency Examination (ABO) pass rates;
4. National Contact Lens Registry Examination NCLE pass rates, in states where contact lens fitting is included in the definition of the scope of practice for Opticians; and
5. State licensure pass rates, in states where opticians are licensed practitioners.
Please note: *State licensing pass rates are not subject to the minimum performance standard requirement.

Informing the Public about Performance and Student Achievement

Outcomes that are pertinent to the practice of opticianry in the state where the program is located must be published and be made available to the public on the program's website. Outcomes must be externally verified where possible. COA requires that a program publishes *readily accessible* and *accurate* information to the public. Program outcomes must be provided for the previous three-year period. Outcomes must be published in a manner that is clear with respect to numbers and percentages and be acceptable to COA.

III. CURRICULUM

The minimal length of the educational program for the Opticianry Degree must be two academic years or equivalent. Instruction must follow an educationally sound and sequenced plan, which documents:

- A. A structured curriculum with clearly written course syllabi which describes competencies and student learning objectives. Unless expressly prohibited by state law, the curriculum must include, but not be limited to:

Profession Related Content Areas

1. Assessment of the Visual System
2. Business Management
3. Contact Lens Clinical Experience (Internship or Externship)
4. Contact Lens Fitting
5. Contact Lens Modification
6. Contact Lens Theory
7. Dispensing Clinical Experience (Internship or Externship)
8. Dispensing Theory
9. Fabrication Techniques
10. Geometric Optics
11. Ocular Anatomy, Physiology, and Pathology
12. Ophthalmic Materials
13. Ophthalmic Terminology
14. Ophthalmic Optics
15. Opticianry Sales Techniques
16. Patient/customer/client Relationships
17. Prescription Analysis
18. Production & Quality Control Methods
19. Professional Ethics
20. Relationships with Eyecare Professionals and Laboratory Personnel
21. Safety and Environmental Health
22. Scope of Practice
23. Spectacle Fitting and Adjusting
24. State and National Opticianry Regulations
25. Managed Care Programs
26. Low vision devices

General Education Content Areas

1. Behavioral or Social Science
2. English
3. Mathematics
4. Science

The curriculum must include a plan for a well-structured, competency-based clinical practice program.

The complete and detailed up-to-date curriculum must be kept on file and be based on clearly stated learning objectives. Course syllabi should include learning objectives, grading criteria, Instructor's name, office hours, didactic and clinical education schedules, and assigned texts. Individual course outlines, class schedules, and laboratory schedules must be distributed to students. Records of directed work experience, i.e., clinical, laboratory or cooperative, and student evaluation must be maintained according to institutional policies.

The institution's distance education courses and/or programs are comparable to those on campus in terms of quality, rigor, breadth of academic and technical standards, and completion requirements.

The institution should employ a standardized approach to create course templates, course descriptions, learning objectives, course requirements (i.e., standard syllabus, grading, resources, etc.), and learning outcomes associated with its courses and/or programs to facilitate quality assurance and the assessment of student learning.

B. Instructional Resources (MUST include but are not limited to textbooks, manuals, handouts, on-line resources etc.)

Textbooks, manuals, handouts, on-line resources, and other resources required to support the learning objectives and meet the educational goals of the program must be available. Sufficient resources must be available to support the assignment of professionally related research papers.

C. Classroom Presentations, Discussions, and Demonstrations

Classes must be held as scheduled and planned and must be structured. For distance learning or any off-site education, courses must provide a structured bidirectional communication between faculty and students and among the students enrolled in the course. (Examples such as: Blackboard, emails, web conferencing.)

The institution employs sufficient policies and/or procedures to ensure timely responses to students' inquiries/concerns raised while enrolled in its distance education courses or programs. (A timely response is defined as one in which feedback is provided back to the student within five academic days or according to the institution's policies.)

D. Examinations, Tests, Assessments and Evaluations (oral, written, and practical) for Didactic and Clinical Aspects of the Program

These tools must be consistent with the program's mission, goals, and learning objectives. All educational laboratory, clinical, and didactic coursework must provide timely written evaluation of a student's academic progress.

The program must ensure, regardless of instructional modality, that all examinations, tests, assessments, and evaluations meet institutional requirements for student oversight, protection, and exam security. The program must conduct final evaluations of student skills and knowledge under supervision of qualified instructional staff as described in Section IV B.

Program personnel must monitor distance education student progress and participation. This may be accomplished through a variety of means that include electronic footprints, electronic grade book, and percentage of course completed.

E. Supervised, Documented, and Structured Laboratory Experience.

Laboratory didactic instruction must be well structured, competency based, and appropriate for each student prior to rotation through a laboratory externship or internship. Direct supervision must be provided by the program faculty. Didactic laboratories must provide an environment supportive of learning and operate in accordance with environmental health and safety regulations as defined by the institution.

F. Supervised and Documented Clinical Experience.

Internships or externships conducted by the program must be supervised or coordinated by the program faculty possessing the appropriate instructor qualifications. There must be a written training plan and goals for students that specify the particular application, objectives, and experiences that are to be acquired during the internship or externship. For externships, the training plan must also designate the on-site employer representative who will be responsible for guiding and overseeing the students' learning experiences and participate in the student's written evaluation. A signed form acknowledging the representative and supervisor responsibility must be on file with the program director. Students are to be graded with respect to their attainment of the learning objectives of the internship or externship.

Each internship or externship must have available a dispensing area that is modeled after a retail/professional optical dispensary and must include:

1. guidelines for professional appearance and presentation to the public.
2. a selection of contemporary ophthalmic frames.
3. hand tools necessary for adjusting and dispensing of eyewear/vision aids.
4. instruments and devices necessary to properly design lenses from a given prescription.
5. instruments and devices to ensure accuracy of the finished product before dispensing to the patient/customer/client.
6. guidelines for financial aspects of professional/retail optical dispensing.
7. an area for record retention of eyewear/vision aids dispensed.

Each internship or externship, where allowed by regulation, must have available a contact lens dispensing area (if applicable) that is modeled after a retail/professional contact lens dispensary and must include:

1. guidelines for professional appearance and presentation to the public
2. an inventory of contact lenses of current technology appropriate for patient/customer/client evaluation

3. where applicable, instruments and devices necessary to properly design contact lenses from a given prescription
4. where applicable, instruments and devices to ensure accuracy of the finished contact lenses before dispensing
5. instruments, equipment, and solutions necessary to evaluate and dispense contact lenses
6. guidelines for financial aspects of professional/retail optical dispensing
7. an area for record retention of eyewear/vision aids dispensed

G. Graduate Competencies

Graduates of an Opticianry Program must demonstrate competencies including, but not limited to, those listed below. Graduates must be able to:

1. use effective oral and written communication.
2. perform basic algebra, trigonometry, and geometry
3. identify the human eye structure, function, and pathology
4. determine physiognomic (facial and eye) measurements
5. neutralize eyewear/vision aids
6. analyze ophthalmic prescriptions
7. assess lifestyle needs of the patient/customer/client
8. select proper frames and lenses
9. price and collect fees for vision aids and services
10. prepare ophthalmic laboratory job orders
11. dispense prescription eyewear/vision aids and instruct patient/customer/client in use and care
12. maintain records
13. provide follow-up service, including eyewear/vision: aids, repair, lens, and frame replacement
14. troubleshoot inquiries and concerns
15. apply applicable laws and regulations
16. demonstrate proficiency in the operation and function of ophthalmic equipment
17. utilize and maintain equipment
18. demonstrate proficiency in finishing techniques
19. describe visual assessment
20. maintain records, including third party forms, inventory, and equipment
21. demonstrate principles of adaptation, dispensing, neutralization and fitting of contact lenses
22. identify situations associated with low vision aids, where appropriate
23. discuss prescription eyewear/vision aids and other patient/customer related information (verbal and written) with the prescriber
24. demonstrate knowledge of applicable state statutes and regulations

IV. RESOURCES

Resources, both direct and indirect, must be sufficient to support the number of students enrolled in the program.

A. Program Director

The Institution must identify a qualified individual responsible for administration, evaluation, development, and revision of the Opticianry Program.

1. Qualifications

In addition to serving on a full-time appointment, the Program Director must possess the following:

- A bachelor's degree
- At least 3 years of experience in the field of ophthalmic optics
- Demonstrate proficiency in program planning, curriculum design, instruction, and academic advising
- At least 2 years of full-time equivalent teaching experience at an opticianry program affiliated with an accredited post-secondary institution
- All credentials for which the students are being prepared in the program or hold comparable credentials that demonstrate at least equivalent training and preparation.

If a Program Director does not meet the Essentials of a bachelor's degree, a detailed educational plan (not to exceed two years) must be submitted to include proposed classes and institution of study.

In the event of a change in Program Director, the Commission must be notified within thirty (30) days. A qualified person must be placed in the position within twelve (12) months of the date of the vacancy. The Commission must receive the new director's curriculum vitae within thirty (30) days of employment. The vitae must include details of education, certification, licensure, training, and general background experience.

To maintain the quality and continuity of the program, it is recommended the program has a robust succession plan detailing strategies for the replacement of critical personnel, such as program directors and faculty members. A succession plan will help ensure that the educational standards and clinical competencies required for successful opticianry practice are consistently met.

2. Responsibilities

In addition to teaching and other duties, the Program Director must be responsible for the organization, administration, periodic review, development, and general effectiveness of the program. The Program Director, the administration, and the institution must be responsible for the maintenance of a safe work environment for staff and students. The institution must be responsible for maintaining the academic integrity of all ophthalmic educational activities. The Program Director's responsibilities for the program must not be adversely affected by educationally unrelated functions.

B. Instructional Staff

1. Qualifications

Full-time faculty/instructional staff must possess the following:

- An associate's degree
- ABO certification

- ABO-AC certification when teaching spectacle dispensing and NCLE-AC certification when teaching contact lenses

Part-time faculty/instructional staff must possess the following:

- An associate's degree
- ABO certification
- NCLE certification (when teaching contact lenses)

Teaching faculty must be individually qualified by education and experience, must be effective in teaching the subjects assigned, and must meet the standards required by the institution.

Teaching faculty for spectacle dispensing must be certified by the American Board of Opticianry or equivalent (e.g. licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist) and licensed (where applicable) in the state in which the program is located, or licensed, where applicable, in the state of residence, if this meets the institution's requirements.

Teaching faculty for contact lens fitting must be certified by the National Contact Lens Examiners or equivalent (e.g. licensed optometrist or licensed ophthalmologist) and licensed (where applicable) in the state in which the program is located, or licensed, where applicable, in the state of residence, if this meets the institution's requirements.

In the event a full-time faculty member does not meet the Essentials of an advanced ABO or NCLE certification as required for the course topics they are teaching; the faculty member will have 12 months from the time of hire to gain the necessary certification and provide documentation to the Commission.

Current teaching faculty of accredited programs reviewed under an earlier version of the *Essentials* are "grandfathered" according to those standards in effect at the time of their appointment to the faculty. However, it is recommended that "grandfathered" faculty not meeting these qualifications upgrade credentials accordingly. Grandfathered status is not transferable to another institution.

Qualified faculty must provide appropriate and documented oversight for all delivery methods of education, ensuring both the rigor of those courses and the quality of instruction.

2. Responsibilities

The faculty must be responsible for submitting course outlines and lesson plans for each course or block of instruction within the course assigned by the director, evaluating students, academic advising, preparing reports as required by the institution and participating in the upgrading and review of course material.

Faculty are responsible for the evaluation of the student's knowledge and skill and assignment of the student's final grade regarding the course learning outcomes and the curriculum as stated in the *Essential's* and as required by the

institution.

Lesson plans must be on file and available, in print or digital format, for review by authorized individuals (ie: faculty, academic leadership, accreditation evaluators). Lesson plans could include, but not be limited to:

- a. Weekly subject material
- b. Handouts
- c. Assessments
- d. List of videos or other technology or teaching tools
- e. Course objectives
- f. Type of instruction (didactic, on-line etc.)
- g. References for both student and instructor
- h. Student Learning Outcomes

It is important to note that the lesson plans are flexible.

3. Instructor/Student Ratio

The instructor/student ratio must be adequate to achieve the stated learning objectives of the curriculum. The COA recommends the following Instructor/Student ratios:

Didactic/Lecture/Theory Course sections – 1:40

Laboratory Course Sections – 1:14

Clinical/Practicum Course Sections: - 1:14

4. Professional Development and Review

- a. The institution and Opticianry Program must encourage and provide opportunities for the faculty members to improve their optical, educational, and professional expertise. The program must provide training for faculty who teach via the use of technology.
- b. The Opticianry Program must have established and published procedures for evaluation of instructors.

C. Preceptors

A preceptor is a professional, not employed by the institution, who supervises students in real-world settings as part of an opticianry clinical course. Preceptors oversee the students' clinical activities, as prescribed by the faculty member, to ensure they meet the required competencies and adhere to professional standards of practice.

1. Qualifications

Off-site Preceptors for spectacle dispensing must be certified by the American Board of Opticianry or licensed (e.g. licensed optician, optometrist, or ophthalmologist), where applicable, in the state of residence, if this meets the institution's requirements.

Off-site Preceptors for contact lens fitting must be certified by the National

Contact Lens Examiners or licensed (e.g. licensed optician, optometrist, or ophthalmologist), where applicable, in the state of residence, if this meets the institution's requirements.

Qualified preceptors must provide appropriate and documented oversight for all off-site instruction, ensuring rigor and the quality of instruction.

2. Professional Development and Review

- a. The institution and Opticianry Program should encourage and provide opportunities for preceptors to improve their optical, educational, and professional expertise.
- b. The Opticianry Program must have established and published procedures for evaluation of preceptors.

D. Financial

The institution must show financial responsibility and commitment to the program. Budget records identifying financial resources of the Opticianry Program must be maintained and available for a period of three (3) years. The Program Director, with the assistance of the administration and faculty, must have input in budget planning.

The institution must demonstrate a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to the continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable enrolled students to complete the degree.

The institution's budget is sufficient to support its distance education courses and/or programs.

E. Facilities

1. General

Adequate classrooms, laboratories, administration offices, and other facilities, as required, must be provided in accordance with the accepted educational standards.

Classrooms must provide an environment supportive of learning. The facilities must include, but not be limited to, an Optical Dispensing Laboratory, an Optical Fabrication Laboratory, and a Contact Lens Laboratory. Laboratory supervisors must be present during laboratory hours.

The college must provide a dedicated space specifically designed for faculty-student meetings. This location should ensure privacy, allowing for a safe environment to hold confidential discussions regarding academic progress, performance evaluations, and personal concerns.

2. Equipment and Supplies

The institution must provide appropriate equipment for classrooms, office, and laboratory. Current laboratory materials in adequate quantities must be provided. There must be a plan for scheduled equipment replacement and repair.

3. Library

A library must be readily accessible and provide access for students to current and relevant materials; to include, but not be limited to online resources, current books, scientific references, periodicals, and other materials related to the curriculum.

The library holdings must contain sufficient traditional and/or online reference material to facilitate the required student and faculty study and research. The faculty must have input in the selection of Opticianry reference materials. A listing of the Opticianry material must be available to the students. Opticianry reference material must be accessible in terms of location and hours of operation.

4. Records

The program must ensure secure and effective management of essential records concerning student admissions, attendance, health (as mandated by the state), achievement, and evaluations, which encompass laboratory, clinical, and distance education activities. This may involve digital platforms equipped with robust security measures and storage solutions, or a secure physical location accessible to program faculty as needed.

F. Instructional Resources and Technology

Adequate multimedia and audiovisual materials must be available for instruction. Faculty and students must have access to computers and to the Internet.

G. Distance Education Resources

The institution has procedures for adequate maintenance of the learning resources (i.e., media, equipment, supplies, libraries, etc.) which support all distance education instruction. The institution annually reviews the quality and currency of its distance education courseware. The institution provides students with technical support for each educational technology hardware system, software system, and delivery system required in a program.

H. Safety and Environmental Management

Programs must operate in accordance with federal and state occupational safety health, environmental regulation, and accepted universal precautions. It is recommended that the Safety and Environmental Checklist as supplied by the Commission be adhered to.

I. Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee must be formed with a clearly defined role and function, and a detailed description of that role and function must be distributed to all members. Members must be appointed in accordance with institutional policy.

1. Qualifications

It is recommended that the Advisory Committee members be certified by the

American Board of Opticianry, National Contact Lens Examiners or state licensed, if required by the state, or could have other appropriate ophthalmic qualifications. No more than two of the committee members may represent the other non-ophthalmic allied health professions or the public. Student representation on the committee is required.

It is recommended that the Advisory Committee consist of at least nine members and consist of Opticians, Optometrists, Ophthalmologists, and laboratory manufacturing representatives. Full-time faculty and institution administration are ex-officio members.

2. Responsibilities

The committee must meet at a minimum annually. For each meeting, an agenda must be distributed in advance and the minutes recorded and maintained. Minutes must include a list of attendees and absentees, and their affiliations.

V. STUDENTS

A. Program Description

An accurate description of the Opticianry Program, course content, and course objectives-must be provided to the students.

The program must make available to each student entering the program current information regarding the criteria for successful completion of the program. The institution and /or program must also make available accurate information which includes:

- Description of Opticianry
- brief description of the required and elective courses
- number of credit hours
- names and rank of faculty
- entrance requirements
- tuition and fees
- scholarships
- financial aid
- cancellation and refund policies
- standards of performance and conduct
- disciplinary procedures and policies
- availability of student health services
- state licensing requirements
- state licensing and national certification pass rates, where available
- laboratory safety procedures
- grading policies
- job placement rates
- information about clinical education
- listing of available periodicals

If the program is accredited by the Commission, any references to the accreditation classification in official publications must be accurate.

The institution or program must provide an academic calendar that outlines schedules for academic terms, school years, and projected student completion timelines.

Grading policies and completion requirements must be published. The admission of students, including advanced placement, must be made in accordance with the accepted practices and policies of the institution.

It is recommended that a recruitment policy be in place. Cancellation and refund policies must be available to the incoming student and must be in compliance with state and federal laws. Enrollment procedures must be clearly defined and comply with prevailing law. These practices must be clearly defined, published by the institution, and readily available.

All institution and program publications and advertising must be truthful and not mislead students or the public. The institution should address Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, The Americans with Disabilities Act, Title IV, HEA eligibility, and any other state or federal regulations that protect the rights of students.

B. Admission

1. The Program Director and/or a member of the instructional staff must cooperate with the institution's admissions officer in establishing admission requirements for students and participate in the final student selection. The Program must adhere to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).
2. Candidates for admission must be high school graduates or the equivalent or have passed pre-admission testing standard to the institution sufficient to confirm the candidate's ability to benefit from the program. High school courses (or equivalent) in biology, English, mathematics, physics, and use of electronic multimedia are recommended. The institution must admit only those students who meet institutional admission requirements and only those who are prepared by background, knowledge, and technical skills to succeed. All enrolled students must have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning.

It is recommended that, once admitted, students from other accredited programs in Opticianry and other allied health professions be given appropriate transfer credits in accordance with the policies of the institution. There may be a system of challenge by examination.

C. Health Services

It is recommended that the institution inform the students of its health care services and that students have access to those services if available. A plan for emergency medical care must be available.

D. Guidance and Counseling

Course transfer guidance, career guidance, and student counseling must be

available. It is recommended that information concerning counseling available for students be published.

E. Student Records

Satisfactory records must be maintained by the institution's registrar, admissions, or records office for student admission, attendance, and course grades. Grades and credit for courses must be recorded on the student transcript and permanently maintained by the institution in a safe and accessible location. The student must be informed of the right to access his/her own records. Access must be limited to authorized personnel.

F. Grievance and Appeal Procedures

Appropriate appeal procedures must be clearly defined and available to the student. The student must be informed of due process regarding unfavorable evaluation, disciplinary action, dismissal, and suspension.

The institution must provide and implement an appropriate policy for handling formal complaints from students, graduates and former students, and mandate that this policy is published.

VI. OPERATIONAL POLICIES

A. Institution and program announcements and advertising must accurately reflect the Opticianry Program offered.

B. Student costs and the awarding of academic credit and degree information must be accurately stated and published.

C. Policies and processes for student withdrawal, refunds of tuition, and refunds of fees must be consistent with the institution's general policy, published, and publicly available.

D. Policies and practices regarding student clinical practice must be published and made available to the students. This must include a policy on infectious disease control and all-applicable state and federal requirements.

E. Student and faculty recruitment and student matriculation practices must be nondiscriminatory.

F. If a program elects to make a public disclosure of its accreditation status granted by the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation, the program must disclose that status accurately and include the specific academic and/or instructional program(s) covered by that status. Additionally, the name and current address and telephone number of the COA must be included in the disclosure.

VII. CONTINUING PROGRAM EVALUATION

- A. A process for periodic self-evaluation of the program's effectiveness must be reflected in program policy and be documented. The institution must evaluate the program's educational effectiveness. The evaluation should include assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. This information should be applied to future admission decisions.
- B. The results of self-evaluation must be appropriately reflected in program development.
- C. The continuing program self-evaluation must include a system for internal and external curriculum validation, evaluation by current students, follow-up studies of alumni, and a dedicated employer survey of graduates. The program must secure sufficient qualitative information to demonstrate an ongoing system of evaluation consistent with the goals of the program.
- D. The Advisory Committee may facilitate program development, evaluation, support, planning, and coordination by periodic evaluation of the program's functions and of its success in achieving its stated learning objectives.
- E. A list of program graduates must be maintained. The results on the National Opticianry Competency Examination administered by the American Board of Opticianry, the National Contact Lens Examination, and state licensure.
- F. Examinations (if applicable) must also be documented and reviewed annually to evaluate effectiveness of the program. The maintenance and documentation of the employment records of recent graduates of the program must be one aspect of program evaluation.

VIII. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

- A. The annual report form or progress report provided by the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation must be completed under the supervision of and signed by the Program Director and either the division chairperson, department head, or institution Chief Executive Officer, and returned by the established deadline. Programs submitting reports incomplete or later than the established deadline will be charged a \$500 late fee per report.
- B. The institution is reminded of the requirements regarding a change in Program Director, documented in Section IV. A. on page 10.
- C. Accreditation of the Opticianry Program may be withdrawn only after notice has been given to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution and the Opticianry Program Director that such action is contemplated. The program is entitled to explanations of the reasons for withdrawal, sufficient time to permit a considered response, and the use of established procedures for appeal.

- D. The Commission on Opticianry Accreditation may withdraw accreditation if:
1. The Opticianry Educational Program is not maintained in substantial compliance with the *Essentials*.
 2. The program does not permit reevaluation after due notice.
 3. The institution's Chief Executive Officer requests the withdrawal of an accreditation by submitting a written request to the Commission.
 4. There are no students in the program for two consecutive years.

ACCREDITATION ADMINISTRATION

- Application for accreditation of an Opticianry program is available online at <http://coaccreditation.com/> and must be made to:

Commission on Opticianry Accreditation
P. O. Box 73862
North Chesterfield, VA 23235
(315) 742-8066
director@coaccreditation.com

- The institution may withdraw its request for accreditation at any time prior to the final action by the Commission.
- The institution/program being evaluated is given the opportunity to review and on the content accuracy of the Evaluation Report before final action is taken in deciding the accreditation classification.
- The Chief Executive Officer of the institution may request a return on-site evaluation.
- Accreditation decisions may be appealed in writing to the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation in accordance with the appeal procedures stated in the Accreditation Guide, available online at <http://coaccreditation.com/>.
- The Commission on Opticianry Accreditation will annually review educational programs for continued accreditation.