

Mutual Recognition Agreement Among Opticianry Regulators

WHEREAS the undersigned agree that there is a high degree of commonality in the work of opticians across Canada and that consequently it is in the public interest to implement an agreement that is intended to achieve the objective of allowing any Optician licensed to practice in one province and territory in Canada to have access to employment opportunities in that occupation in all provinces or territories in Canada in a manner which is consistent with and incorporates the provisions of chapter 7 of the Agreement of Internal Trade ("AIT");

AND WHEREAS it is further agreed and understood that it is essential that there be a threshold level of competence and safety maintained for the protection of the public;

AND WHEREAS each of the signatory provinces and territories recognizes and respects the fact that there is more than one path to achieving competence and that each of them takes the responsibility of setting standards responsibly and in good faith;

The National Accreditation Committee of Opticians (NACO) is an organization of Canadian Optician Regulatory Agencies whose constituent delegates are committed to an accreditation process through the assessment and recognition of educational processes and assessment tools. The goal of NACO is to assist the regulatory agencies in the evaluation and recognition of opticianry programs and assessment processes in Canada in order to register well-trained, competent applicants who provide services to the public. The provincial and territorial regulatory bodies will determine their own educational processes and the assessment tools they will use for licensure. NACO will determine with full respect of the right and authority of the provincial and territorial regulatory bodies and of government legislation, which educational processes have a high degree of commonality and which assessment tools may be recognized as equivalent.

Interpretation

In this agreement, unless the context otherwise requires:

At the time the agreement comes into force the "assessment process for licensure" means the NACO Eyeglass and Contact Lens Examinations, the College of Opticians of British Columbia Eyeglass and Contact Lens Examinations, the College of Opticians of Ontario Opticians Examination and the College Edouard-Monpetit Comprehensive Examination;

"good standing" shall be defined by each Regulatory Body for the purpose of licensure in their respective Province or Territory;

"license and/or licensure" shall include the terms registration or certification that qualifies an Optician in some jurisdictions

"mutual recognition agreement" shall be referred to hereinafter as "MRA"

Purpose

We the undersigned, enter into this MRA in order to comply with our obligations under the Agreement on Internal Trade, Chapter 7 (Labour Mobility). The purpose of this MRA

is to establish the conditions under which an optician who is licensed in one Province or Territory in Canada will have his/her qualifications recognized in another Province or Territory in Canada, which is a Party to this Agreement.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

The preamble in this agreement shall form part of this agreement.

1. The signatories agree that there is generally a high degree of commonality in the practice of opticianry in all signatory Provinces and Territories. This commonality is reflected in the occupational standards in place in each Province or Territory and is reflected in the Occupational Analysis/Opticians© document. Consequently it is agreed that the accredited education and training process and approved examinations will meet and fulfil the criteria established by the signatory Provincial and Territorial regulatory bodies and will be recognized by each province or territory as part of their licensing requirement for labour mobility purposes.
2. For the purposes of this agreement, an Optician who is currently licensed and who is deemed to be in good standing in their home province or territory at the time this agreement comes into force and effect shall be accepted for licensure in any other province or territory in Canada.
3. All Opticians who are licensed and who are deemed to be in good standing in their home province or territory after this agreement comes into force and effect shall be accepted for licensure in any other province or territory in Canada if they satisfy the receiving province or territory that:
 - a) They have graduated from an education or training process which is recognized and deemed equivalent by NACO in accordance with the Provincial or Territorial regulatory agency and;
 - b) They have successfully completed an assessment process for licensure, which is recognized and deemed equivalent by NACO in accordance with the Provincial or Territorial regulatory body as establishing a threshold level of competence in the practice of opticianry.
4. All Opticians whose licensing is restricted to eyeglasses only and who wish to move to a province or territory with combined eyeglass and contact lens licensure will be eligible for a temporary license as defined by the legislation of the receiving province or territory. The temporary license shall be issued for the sole purpose of permitting the applicant a reasonable time frame within which to fulfill the contact lens licensing requirements of the receiving province or territory.

Maintenance and Administration of the Agreement

This is a dynamic Agreement, which will develop and change over time, as required by circumstances. We, the undersigned, agree to initiate periodic reviews of this Agreement on an ad hoc basis, or at the request of one or more signatories

Any changes to professional practice standards, licensing or legislative requirements that may impact this Agreement will be communicated in writing to all signatories in order to provide them with an opportunity to review and comment prior to implementation.

Ratification on behalf of the Regulatory Bodies:

College of Opticians of British Columbia
Ratified - September 26, 2003

Alberta Opticians Association
Ratified - September 21, 2001

Saskatchewan Ophthalmic Dispensers Association
Ratified - September 21, 2001

The Opticians of Manitoba
Ratified - September 21, 2001

College of Opticians of Ontario
Ratified - September 21, 2001

Ordre des opticiens d'ordonnances du Québec
Not Ratified

New Brunswick Guild of Dispensing Opticians
Ratified - September 21, 2001

Nova Scotia Board of Dispensing Opticians
Ratified - March 11, 2004

Prince Edward Island Board of Dispensing Opticians
Ratified - September 21, 2001

Newfoundland Board of Dispensing Opticians
Ratified - September 21, 2001