ESSENTIALS OF A ONE-YEAR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

FOR

OPHTHALMIC LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY

Initially adopted 1974
Revised 1978, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1990, 1995, 2001
2008, Effective September 1, 2008

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"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, explanatory statements which clarify the "Essentials," are enclosed in parentheses. The guidelines are not standards but provide examples
and clarification to assist in interpreting the "Essentials."

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PREAMBLE

SCOPE of accreditation for the Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

The COA accredits two-year opticianry degree programs and one-year ophthalmic laboratory technology certificate programs. This document contains the requirements for accreditation of one-year ophthalmic laboratory technology certificate programs.

OBJECTIVES

The Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology profession cooperates to establish, maintain and promote standards of quality for educational Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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 Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSION

Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians are broadly defined as those individuals who manufacture eyewear by fabrication and assembly of the various components. His/her wide range of duties includes transcribing prescriptions, selecting appropriate lens forms, and processing the materials to the desired prescription. In addition, his/her duties may include contact with other ophthalmic professionals as well as persons from ophthalmic supplier firms.

Upon completion of the program, the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technician should, at the minimum, be able to:

- Analyze lens and frame combinations;
- Demonstrate knowledge of practical optics and lens forms;
- Grind and polish lenses;
- Manufacture eyewear by fabrication and assembly of the various components;
- Tint and coat lenses;
- Neutralize lenses and verify eyewear/vision aids prescriptions;
- Apply rules and regulations for equipment safety; understand the function of equipment and utilize equipment to its full potential;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the principles of laboratory management;
- Understand and apply current industry standards for ophthalmic products.

ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

I. INSTITUTION

A. The institution offering the program must be accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency and/or appropriate state accreditation agency in the state in which the program is physically located. In Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Programs which have laboratory phases provided in more than one institution, the institution granting the certificate or diploma is responsible for assuring that assigned student activities in the laboratory settings are educational.

B. Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Programs may be housed in:

1. colleges or universities
2. community or junior colleges
3. postsecondary, vocational-technical schools or institutes
4. military schools
5. proprietary schools.

The Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program must have been in operation for at least one academic year, or the equivalent, and have graduated at least one class.

II. MISSION, GOALS, AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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 are 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 Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology. This statement must be published and available to the students.

B. Goals

The program must have clearly stated goals which are appropriate for Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology. These goals must be published and made available to the students.

A goal of the program should be to eliminate hazardous waste and to reduce non-hazardous waste to the minimum levels economically and technically practical, and to be in full compliance with all federal and state environmental regulations.

C. Learning Objectives

The program must have clearly stated competency based learning objectives which are appropriate for Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology. These learning objectives must be published and available for the student.

D. Review

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

1. The reviews must determine whether programs are relevant to the stated mission, goals, and learning objectives, 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 upon experience.

2. A documented annual review of mission, goals, and learning objectives must include students, faculty members, administrators, practitioners, and members of the Advisory Committee.

3. The review process must ensure that appropriate technology is used to meet the program’s objectives.

III. CURRICULUM

The minimal length of the educational program for the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program is one academic year or equivalent. Instruction must follow an educationally sequenced plan which documents:

A. A structured curriculum with clearly written course syllabi which describe competencies and student learning objectives that are acceptable and applicable to the goals of the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program. Unless expressly prohibited by state law, the curriculum must include, but not be limited to:

Profession Related Content Areas

1. Fabrication Techniques
2. Frame Materials and Specifications
3. Inventory Control
4. Laboratory Management
5. Lens Applications
6. Ophthalmic Lens Design and Types
7. Ophthalmic medical Terminology
8. Optical Theory
9. Evaluation of lens and frame combinations
10. Production and Quality Control
11. Professional Ethics
12. Relationships with Eyecare Professionals
13. Safety and Environmental Health
14. State Opticianry Regulations

General Education Content Areas

1. Computer Technology
2. English
3. Mathematics

The curriculum must include a plan for a well-structured, competency-based Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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 available and distributed to students. Records of directed work experience, i.e., clinical, laboratory or cooperative, and student evaluation must be maintained.

Although the Essentials emphasize learning objectives, they do not specify exact hours, and a content area may be included in a course with other content areas. Educators should develop a program which satisfies these learning objectives, utilizing to the best advantage facilities and personnel available. Freedom from the restrictions of required hours of

instruction on specific subjects should encourage innovation to improve education.

An Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program may teach dispensing courses only on orientation basis. Additionally, it is not in keeping with the "*Essentials*" of an Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program's mission, goals, or learning objectives, to include a course on contact lens fitting in the course curriculum.

B. Instructional Material (textbooks, manuals, handouts, etc.)

Materials required to meet educational goals and/or learning objectives of the program must be available and utilized. Sufficient resources must be available to support assignment of professionally related research papers.

C. Classroom Presentations, Discussions, and Demonstrations. Classes must be held as scheduled and planned, and must be structured.

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

These tools must be consistent with mission, goals, and learning objectives and must be utilized without discrimination.

E. Supervised and Documented Laboratory Experience, and Practice of Environment Safeguards.

Didactic laboratory instruction (application of theory under supervision) must be well structured, competency based, and appropriate for each student prior to rotation through a clinical externship or internship. Direct supervision of the didactic laboratory must be provided by program faculty. Didactic laboratories must provide an environment conducive to learning and operate in accordance with environmental health and safety regulations.

F. Graduate Competencies

Graduates of an Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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. maintain records;
3. perform basic mathematical and algebraic operations;
4. prepare ophthalmic laboratory job orders;
5. verify proper frames and lenses for job orders;
6. utilize and maintain equipment;
7. respond to dispenser's inquiries;
8. apply rules and regulations for safe work practices;
9. demonstrate proficiency in the operation and function of equipment;
10. assist in the business related area of ophthalmic laboratory technology, including record maintenance, frame and lens inventory, supply, equipment maintenance, and third party forms;
11. neutralize eyewear/Ophthalmic devices prescriptions;

12. perform final inspection and verification;
13. grind, and polish lenses;
14. fabricate eyewear;
15. tint and coat lenses;
16. perform minor frame repair;
17. perform impact resistance treatment and testing;
18. discuss prescription eyewear/Ophthalmic devices and other related information (verbal and written);
19. have basic computer skills;
20. demonstrate knowledge of applicable state and national statutes and regulations;
21. demonstrate knowledge of safety and environmental health standards.

IV. RESOURCES

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

A. Program Director

The Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program must identify a qualified individual responsible for administration, evaluation, development and revision of the program.

1. Qualifications

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

- At least 3 years of appropriate Ophthalmic Laboratory qualifications and experience, and meet the requirements of the institution;
- The Program Director must be currently certified by the American Board of Opticianry, must be licensed in the state in which he/she teaches.

Program Directors 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 position of Program Director. However, it is recommended that "grandfathered" directors not meeting these qualifications upgrade credentials accordingly.

The Program Director must demonstrate proficiency in program planning, curriculum design, instruction and academic advising. The director should have had at least two years experience as an instructor at an accredited Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program, or the equivalent.

In the event of a change in program directors, the Commission must be notified within thirty (30) days. A qualified person must be placed in the position within nine (9) months of the date of the vacancy. The Commission must receive the new director's curriculum vitae within thirty (30) days of period of employment, and it must include details of education, training and general background experience.

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 must be responsible for the maintenance of a safe and healthful work environment for staff and students. The Program Director's responsibilities for the program must not be adversely affected by educationally unrelated functions.

B. Instructional Staff

1. Qualifications

The faculty (instructors) 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, if it is included in the curriculum, must be certified by the American Board of Opticianry and licensed (where applicable) in the state in which the program is located.

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.

Lesson plans must be on file and available for review by authorized persons. Lesson plans could include, but not be limited to:

1. Weekly subject material;
2. Handouts;
3. Tests;
4. List of videos or other technology or teaching tools;
5. Learning objectives
6. Type of instruction
7. References for both student and instructor.

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.

4. Professional Development and Review

a. The institution and Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program must encourage and provide opportunities for the faculty to improve their optical, educational, and professional expertise.

b. The Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program must have established and published procedures for evaluation of instructors.

C. Financial

The institution must show financial responsibility and commitment to the program. Budget records identifying financial resources of the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program must be maintained and available for a period of three (3) years. The program director should be responsible, assisted by the faculty and administration, for planning the budget.

D. Facilities

1. General

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

Classrooms and laboratories must provide an environment conducive to learning. The equipment in use must be current. The facilities must include an Ophthalmic Laboratory to ensure adequate practicum and learning experiences for all students. Laboratory supervision must be available during laboratory hours. The program director's office must provide privacy. The location must be secure for record maintenance.

2. Equipment and Supplies

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

3. Library

A library must be readily accessible and contain an adequate supply of current books, scientific references, periodicals, and other materials related to the curriculum.

The library holdings must contain sufficient reference material to facilitate 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

Satisfactory records must be maintained for all student admissions, attendance, health (if required by the state), achievement and evaluation.

E. Instructional Resources

Adequate multimedia and audiovisual materials must be available for instruction.

Faculty and students must have access to computers and to the Internet.

F. Safety and Environmental Management

Program must operate in accordance with federal and state occupational safety, health and environmental regulation. Accepted universal precautions should be observed. The Safety and Environmental Checklist as supplied by the Commission must be adhered to.

G. 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

Advisory Committee members should be certified by the American Board of Opticianry and/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 allied health profession or the public. Student representation on the committee is required.

The Advisory Committee should consist of at least nine members. Full-time faculty and institution administration are ex officio members.

2. Responsibilities

The committee must meet regularly on a semi-annual basis. For each meeting an agenda must be distributed in advance and the minutes recorded and maintained.

Minutes must include list of attendees and absentees and their affiliations.

V. STUDENTS

A. Program Description

An accurate description of the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program, course content, course objectives, and learning outcomes must be provided to the students. Each student must be given the criteria for successful completion of the program and for graduation.

An Optical Student Handbook must be issued The program must publish and distribute at least biannually for each student. Information regarding the criteria for successful completion of the program. It must also publish accurate information which includes:

- descriptions of Opticianry, Optometry, Ophthalmology, and auxiliary personnel associated with each;
- a description of the profession;
- the organization of the program;
- a 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 and exam pass rates;
- national certification requirements;
- laboratory safety procedures;
- grading policies;
- dress code;
- clearly stated learning objectives and outcomes;
- exit competencies;
- job placement rates;
- information about clinical education;
- and periodicals.

If the program is accredited by the Commission, any references to the accreditation classification in official publications must be accurate. Practices must be clearly defined in all published materials.

The institution/program must include in its catalog an academic calendar that outlines schedules for academic terms, school years, and projected student completion timelines**.**

Grading policies and completion requirements must be accurately stated in all the college catalog and other publications. The admission of students, including advanced placement, must be made in accordance with the accepted practices and

policies of the institution. The program's admission policies must be supportive of the institution's mission. These policies must include – qualitative and quantitative requirements that identify potential students who demonstrate a capability to be successful in this program.

A recruitment policy must be in place to inform the incoming students of the instructional objectives, stated clearly. 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 in the college catalog, readily available, and nondiscriminatory.

All institution and program publications and advertising must be truthful so as to 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. Admission of students, including advance placement, must be made in accordance with the accepted practices and policies of the institution. These practices must be clearly defined, published, readily available, and nondiscriminatory.

   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. Applicants with physical disabilities should have reasonable consideration given to their condition.

2. A Candidate for admission will:

   a. be a high school graduate
   b. have passed the GED examination; or
   c. have passed an independently administered Ability to Benefit examination from the list approved by and published by The Secretary, United States Department of Education

   The institution is responsible for documentation and the independent administration of an examination approved by the United States Department of Education.

   For an individual to qualify for Title IV assistance who does not have a high school diploma, or the recognized equivalent of such certificate, the student must meet *either* of the following standards:

   1. Take an independently administered examination and achieve a score specified by The Secretary, United States Department of Education, demonstrating an ability to benefit from the program. the examination will be approved by The Secretary on the basis of

compliance with standards for development, administration, and scoring prescribed in regulations, or

2. A student will be judged as having ability to benefit in accordance with a process that a state shall prescribe. State prescribed processes must be reviewed and approved by The Secretary within six (6) months of submission to the Department of Education.

The institution must admit to its distance educational programs only those students who meet institutional admission requirements and who also are prepared by background, knowledge, and technical skills to succeed in the distance delivery environment. All enrolled students must have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning.

Graduates of other accredited programs in Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Programs and other allied health professions should be given appropriate transfer credits in accordance with the policies of the institution. A system of *challenge by examination by virtue of extended experience* should be incorporated into the admissions program. Admission data should be maintained by the institution the program.

The faculty and educational facilities must be adequate for the size of enrollment. A pre-entrance counseling visit is recommended.

C. Health Services

The institution must inform the students of its health care services and students must have access to those services. Emergency medical care must be available. This information should be in the program handbook.

D. Guidance and Counseling

Academic guidance, career guidance, and student counseling must be available.

Student complaints must be kept on file, and opened only to appropriate persons.

Qualified Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology faculty or counseling personnel must post office hours and should be readily available to students needing this service. Counseling sessions should be documented in the student's records. Information concerning counseling available for students should be published in the student handbook.

E. Appeal Procedures

Appropriate appeal procedures must be clearly defined and available to the student. The student should be informed of due process with regard to unfavorable evaluation, disciplinary action, dismissal, and suspension. This information should be in the student handbook.

VI. OPERATIONAL POLICIES

A. Institution and program announcements and advertising must reflect accurately the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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 with respect to race, creed, color, sex, age, handicap(s), or national origin.[1]

[1] Removed from degree Essentials in 2002 because of redundancy and removal of requirement for a separate program handbook.

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 faculty satisfaction. With regard to distance educational activities, the demonstrated assessment of student learning outcomes must be comparable to outcomes of student learning in more traditional formats. The institution must conduct assessment of the characteristics of student capability to succeed in the distance delivery environment. This information should be applied to future admission decisions.

B. The results of the self-evaluation must be appropriately reflected in program organization.

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.

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.

A list of program graduates must be maintained. 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 later than the established deadline will be charged a $200 late fee per report.

B. 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 nine (9) months of the date of the vacancy. The Commission must receive the new director's curriculum vitae within thirty (30) days of period of employment. The vitae must include details of education, certification, licensure, training, and general background experience.

C. Accreditation of the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program may be withdrawn only after notice has been given to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution and the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program Director that such action is contemplated. The program is entitled to explanations of the reasons for withdrawal, sufficient time to permit considered response, and the use of established procedures for appeal.

D. The Commission on Opticianry Accreditation may withdraw accreditation if:

1. The Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology 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 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 a program in Opticianry must be made to:

  Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

  PO Box 208
  Hillsborough, NC 27278
  Ellen@COAccreditation.com

- The evaluation and accreditation process of an Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program is voluntary (including on-site visits) and can be initiated only at the expressed and written request of the Chief Executive Officer of the institution and the Ophthalmic Laboratory Technology Program Director.

- 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 comment 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.

- The Commission on Opticianry Accreditation will periodically survey educational programs for continued accreditation.

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