



Information for New Optometry Students

Congratulations on starting your journey to becoming a practicing optometrist! The National Board of Examiners in Optometry has prepared this video for new optometry students, to help provide you with the information you will need to know about NBEO and our optometric licensure exams.

THE PATH TO BECOMING A LICENSED OPTOMETRIST



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You've all worked hard during your undergraduate coursework and completing the OAT, and now you've made it to optometry school. And now that you're here, we will be looking at the steps that remain on your path to becoming a licensed optometrist.

Your next four years will be filled with lectures, hands-on labs, and patient encounters, in order for you to earn your Doctor of Optometry degree.

But the OD degree itself is not the only thing that is required to start seeing patients on your own. You will also need a license to practice optometry. And to obtain a license, you will need to demonstrate to a licensing authority such as a state board, that you have the knowledge and skills to be a safe and competent clinician. This will include completing a series of licensure exams administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry, or NBEO. Most optometry students finish their licensure exams during their last two years of optometry school.

After graduation and licensure, some of you may choose to enroll in a residency, a one-year program that allows you to gain more advanced knowledge and expertise in various optometric specialties.

Becoming a licensed optometrist is a life-long commitment to learning. The world of optometry and biomedical sciences is constantly evolving, and staying current through continuing education is essential to maintaining your license and to ensuring ongoing clinical competence.

REGULATORY ORGANIZATIONS



ASSOCIATION OF REGULATORY BOARDS OF OPTOMETRY



STATE AND PROVINCIAL OPTOMETRY BOARDS



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There are several organizations in the profession of optometry that are commonly confused, so we'll start by clarifying the role of NBEO compared to a few other organizations.

The Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry, or ARBO, represents the regulatory side of optometry. It provides resources and support to regulatory boards of optometry, the State and Provincial Boards. These regulatory boards are responsible for protecting the public by formulating rules and regulations regarding the practice of optometry within their jurisdictions, including licensure requirements. One way that ARBO and the state boards work to protect the public is by ensuring that only qualified individuals can obtain and retain an optometry license.

It's important to note that their role is not to advocate for the doctors, students, educators, or the profession itself, but there are other organizations that serve in these capacities.

Prior to 1951, each state board administered its own licensure exam. Not only was this an inefficient use of resources, but it also meant that standards varied across states. To address this, ARBO (then known as the International Board of Boards) established NBEO to create a nationally standardized exam. Today, NBEO continues to collaborate with ARBO and the state boards to assess the competency of optometry candidates, ensuring a consistent and rigorous standard across the profession.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS



STATE OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATIONS



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES OPTOMÉTRISTES



PROVINCIAL OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATIONS

Another organization that you may be familiar with is the AOA, or American Optometric Association.

While ARBO, the state boards, and NBEO serve in the regulatory side of optometry for the purpose of protecting the public, the AOA is an advocacy organization.

The AOA is made up of state, student, and armed forces optometric associations, which work in various capacities such as publishing professional standards and lobbying governments.

The Canadian Association of Optometrists, or CAO, has a similar role in Canada.

THE OPTOMETRIC OATH

With full deliberation, I freely and solemnly pledge that:

I AFFIRM that the health of my patient will be my first consideration.

I WILL practice the art and science of optometry faithfully and conscientiously, and to the fullest scope of my competence.

I WILL uphold and honorably promote by example and action the highest standards, ethics and ideals of my chosen profession and the honor of the degree, Doctor of Optometry, which has been granted me.

I WILL provide professional care for the diverse populations who seek my services, with concern, with compassion and with due regard for their human rights and dignity.

I WILL work to expand access to quality care and improve health equity for all communities.

I WILL place the treatment of those who seek my care above personal gain and strive to see that none shall lack for proper care.

I WILL hold as privileged and inviolable all information entrusted to me in confidence by my patients.

I WILL advise my patients fully and honestly of all which may serve to restore, maintain or enhance their vision and general health.

I WILL strive continuously to broaden my knowledge and skills so that my patients may benefit from all new and efficacious means to enhance the care of human vision.

I WILL share information cordially and unselfishly with my fellow doctors of optometry and other professionals for the benefit of patients and the advancement of human knowledge and welfare.

I WILL do my utmost to serve my community, my country and humankind as a citizen as well as a doctor of optometry.

I HEREBY commit myself to be steadfast in the performance of this my solemn oath and obligation.

Source: www.aoa.org/about-the-aoa/ethics-and-values

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The AOA publishes the Optometric Oath and its Code of Ethics as guides for the professional and ethical conduct of optometrists.

The Optometric Oath begins with an affirmation that the health of your patient will be your first consideration.

THE AOA CODE OF ETHICS

It shall be the ideal, resolve, and duty of all optometrists:

TO KEEP their patients' eye, vision, and general health paramount at all times;

TO RESPECT the rights and dignity of patients regarding their health care decisions;

TO ADVISE their patients whenever consultation with, or referral to another optometrist or other health professional is appropriate;

TO ENSURE confidentiality and privacy of patients' protected health and other personal information;

TO STRIVE to ensure that all persons have access to eye, vision, and general health care;

TO ADVANCE their professional knowledge and proficiency to maintain and expand competence to benefit their patients;

TO MAINTAIN their practices in accordance with professional health care standards;

TO PROMOTE ethical and cordial relationships with all members of the health care community;

TO RECOGNIZE their obligation to protect the health and welfare of society; and

TO CONDUCT themselves as exemplary citizens and professionals with honesty, integrity, fairness, kindness, and compassion

Source: www.aoa.org/about-the-aoa/ethics-and-values

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And the AOA Code of Ethics includes the duty of all optometrists to keep their patients' eye, vision, and general health paramount at all times.

NBEO MISSION STATEMENT

Protect the public by developing, administering, scoring, and reporting results of valid examinations that assess competency in optometry.

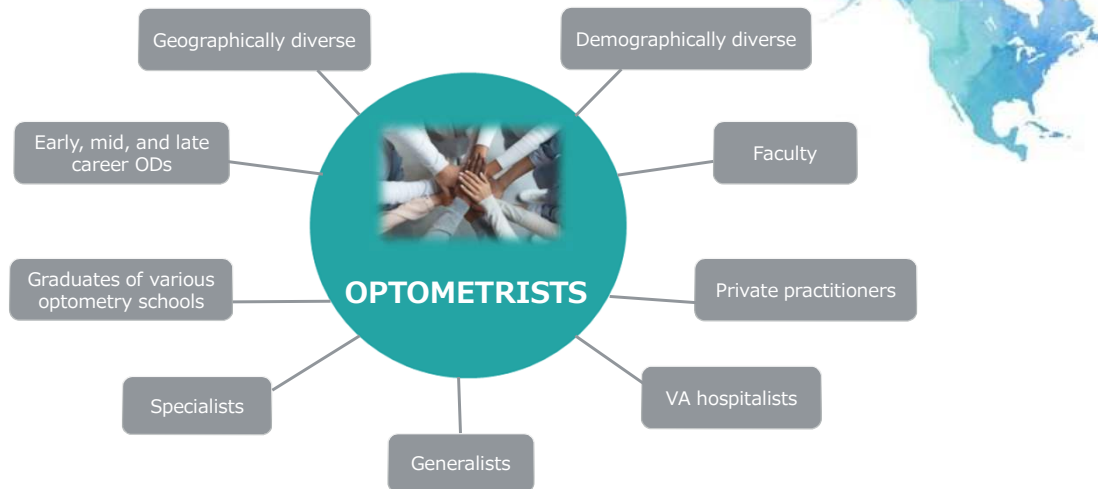


In keeping with optometry's commitment to patient welfare, NBEO's mission aligns with that of the state optometry boards: to protect the public.

NBEO fulfills this mission by developing, administering, scoring, and reporting results of valid examinations that assess competency in optometry.

And state boards use the results of these examinations to ensure that only those candidates who possess the knowledge and skills necessary for the independent practice of optometry are granted a license.

WHO CREATES NBEO EXAMS?



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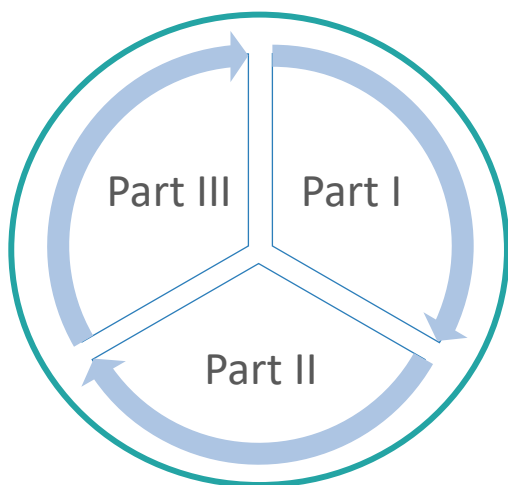
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In developing its exams, NBEO follows established best practices in testing and assessment. This involves facilitating the contributions of hundreds of licensed practicing optometrists throughout the exam development and administration process; including the creation of exam blueprints, writing and reviewing questions, evaluating optometric skills, and determining passing standards.

These optometrists, or subject matter experts, are practicing throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada. They are demographically diverse and seeing patients in a variety of settings. They are graduates of various optometry schools, and they span from early- to late-career practitioners.

Once you become a licensed optometrist, you also may have an opportunity to serve as a subject matter expert and contribute to NBEO's mission of protecting the public.

NBEO ENTRY-INTO-THE-PROFESSION EXAM SERIES



Three parts, each formatted to assess specific knowledge and skills required for competent practice.

Focus on knowledge and skills a newly licensed practitioner should know.

Competency in optometry is demonstrated **when a candidate has passed all three parts** of the series.

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Because optometric residency is optional (unlike medical residency), new optometry school graduates can obtain their license and move directly into independent and unsupervised practice. Therefore, it is imperative that candidates are assessed thoroughly and holistically.

NBEO's Entry-Into-The-Profession exam series consists of three parts, each of which assesses a different set of optometric knowledge and skills. The focus of this exam series is on the knowledge and skills a newly licensed practitioner should know for safe and effective practice. Keep in mind, this may or may not include the exact knowledge domains that are taught in the schools and colleges of optometry.

Together, the series provides a comprehensive assessment, and when all three parts are passed, you have demonstrated overall competency to independently practice optometry.

PART I ABS®: APPLIED BASIC SCIENCE

Assesses knowledge and understanding of the underlying basic science concepts necessary to enter the clinical practice of optometry:

*Anatomy, Biochemistry, Physiology, Immunology,
Microbiology, Pathology, Pharmacology, Optics*

- When: March of third academic year
- Available twice a year: March and August
- 1-day (8 hours) computer-based exam
- 370 multiple-choice items
- Administered at Pearson VUE Professional Test Centers
- Fee as of August 2025: \$1445 (subject to change)
- Six attempts

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Part I is Applied Basic Science, which will assess your knowledge and understanding of the underlying basic science concepts that are necessary to enter the clinical practice of optometry.

You are first eligible to take the Part I exam in March of your third year, and the exam is also offered in August each year.

This exam is 8 hours long, split into 2 sessions with a break in-between.

It contains 370 multiple-choice items and is administered at Pearson VUE Professional test centers across the US, Puerto Rico, and parts of Canada.

The current fee for Part I, which you will see is the same for Part II and Part III, is \$1445, and Parts I, II, and III each have a limit of 6 attempts.

PART II PAM®: PATIENT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

**Assesses clinical thinking and decision-making
with an emphasis on diagnosis and treatment**

- When: Academic year of graduation
- Available twice a year: December and April
- 1-day (7 hours) computer-based exam
- 350 multiple-choice items based on patient case presentations
- Embedded Treatment and Management of Ocular Disease (TMOD®) exam
 - 120 of the 350 items are categorized as TMOD items
 - TMOD may be taken separately if needed
- Administered at Pearson Professional Test Centers
- Fee as of August 2025: \$1445 (subject to change)
- Six attempts

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Part II is Patient Assessment and Management, which will assess your clinical thinking and decision-making, with an emphasis on diagnosis and treatment.

You are first eligible to take the Part II exam during your academic year of graduation, available in December and April.

This exam is 7 hours long, also split into 2 sessions with a break in-between, and it consists of a series of patient cases with 350 associated multiple-choice items.

There is an additional assessment embedded within Part II, where of those 350 items, 120 of them are categorized as Treatment and Management of Ocular Disease, or TMOD, items. Some states require a passing score on both the overall Part II exam and the TMOD items, and the TMOD exam can be taken separately if needed.

PART III PEPS®: PATIENT ENCOUNTERS AND PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Assesses case analysis, critical thinking, and essential clinical skills

- When: Academic year of graduation
- Available August through May
- 1-day exam
- Administered at the National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry (NCCTO®) in Charlotte, North Carolina
- 12 stations with trained standardized patients
 - 10 Patient Encounters and 2 Performance Skills
- Fee as of August 2025: \$1445 (subject to change)
- Six attempts



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And finally, Part III is Patient Encounters and Performance Skills, which assesses case analysis, critical thinking, and essential clinical skills using trained standardized patients at the National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry in Charlotte, NC.

There are 10 patient encounter stations and 2 performance skills stations.

You are first eligible to take Part III during your academic year of graduation, and it's offered on a continuous basis from August through May.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE OPTOMETRY.ORG

-  Exam overview and outlines
-  Sample and practice exam questions
-  Tutorials and what to expect on test day
-  Schedules, fees, and registration
-  Scoring and Results
-  Policies

At [optometry.org](https://www.optometry.org) you will find many resources to guide you before and after your exam, including exam outlines, sample questions, and important policies such as Ethics, Eligibility, and Test Accommodations policies.

OTHER EXAMS OFFERED BY NBEO

LSPE®

LASER AND SURGICAL PROCEDURES EXAMINATION

Required by some state(s) for licensure. Administered at the National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry (NCCTO) in Charlotte, NC. Hybrid exam consisting of two portions: clinical skills and computer-based multiple-choice items. Limited to six attempts.

ISE®

INJECTIONS SKILL EXAMINATION

Required by some states for licensure. Administered at the NCCTO in Charlotte, NC, and may be scheduled to be taken on the same day as Part III PEPS. Limited to six attempts.

ACMO®

ADVANCED COMPETENCE IN MEDICAL OPTOMETRY

Designed for those who completed an optometric residency, licensed ODs training residents or ODs practicing at federal facilities who seek formal recognition of advanced competence in diagnosing and treating ocular disease. Required by the American Board of Certification in Medical Optometry (ABCMO) for board certification.

OSLE®

ONLINE STATE LAW EXAMS

Required by some states for licensure. Depending on individual state requirements, may be delivered remotely or at the NCCTO in Charlotte, NC.

NBEO also offers other exams, such as the Injections Skill Examination, and the Laser and Surgical Procedures Examination, some of which may be required for licensure in certain states. You can find more information about these exams on our website as well.

CREATE AN ACCOUNT



Unique ID for every optometrist and student

Required for NBEO exam registration

Used to track continuing education

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You do have a little while before you'll be taking your first NBEO exam, but you should create an account with NBEO now so that you'll be included in all relevant communications. You can do this by scanning the QR code, or by using the registration tab at optometry.org. We recommend using a personal email address to ensure you'll have access to your account after graduation.

When you create your account with NBEO, you will be assigned your OE Tracker number. The OE here stands for Optometric Education.

Be careful to record this number for future use because this will be your unique ID to register for NBEO exams and to track your continuing education after licensure.



**WE ARE SO EXCITED TO BE A PART OF YOUR JOURNEY
TO BECOMING A LICENSED OPTOMETRIST!**

Questions? Email: nbeo@optometry.org



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If you have any questions, you are always welcome to email us at nbeo@optometry.org, and we will be happy to assist you.

Congratulations again on this important milestone!

All of us at NBEO are excited to be a part of your journey to becoming a licensed optometrist, and we extend our best wishes for your success.