

Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes

June 2009 update

Definition and purpose:

The Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO) was created so that orthoptists wanting to immigrate to Quebec and holding a diploma issued by a francophone European university may successfully pass the written and oral examinations and be certified by the Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC).

The goal:

Filling the shortage of orthoptists in Quebec and favouring recruitment.

Prior conditions:

PIFO is offered only to candidates who want to work in Quebec.

PIFO therefore has to evaluate the candidate's interest in:

- immigrating for the long term,
- working as an orthoptist in Quebec,
- working in a Quebec hospital centre where there are positions to be filled (opening one's own private practice is not permitted in Quebec),
- holding a valid immigrant visa or proof of ongoing procedures to that end.

Inclusion criteria:

- The candidate must be francophone and a graduate of a recognized francophone European university,
- obtained academic grades equal to or higher than the Canadian average (70%),
- has valid professional experience,
- has worked in a stimulating professional environment,
- may have stopped working but for less than 3 years,
- be familiar with English
- graduated at most 5 years ago.

If the candidate has been graduated for more than 5 years, the COC teaching committee can accept him after evaluation of his professional experience.

Procedures:

The candidate must submit his complete curriculum vitae to the PIFO Preselection Committee (diploma, content of training acquired, professional experience and letters of reference). If the file is retained following examination, PIFO will forward it to the COC Selection Committee, which will confirm to the candidate that he has been admitted.

Organization of studies:

PIFO will guide the candidate in his studies, for a period of nine months beginning in October. His participation in the program will be organized according to an agreement between PIFO and the candidate.

The candidate has the obligation to begin with a one-month full-time internship as an observer. The internship will take place in COC-accredited centres, i.e.: Sainte-Justine Hospital, the Montreal Children's Hospital, and CHUM's Notre-Dame Hospital (francophone and anglophone paediatric hospital and hospital with an adult clientele).

Two weeks after the internship begins, a written or oral examination in French will serve to evaluate the candidate's level of knowledge and shortcomings in order to establish specific objectives adapted to each student.

After the internship month, the PIFO director must ensure that the candidate is interested in pursuing the training program.

PIFO'S role

After making sure of the candidate's reliability, PIFO will fully play its role to:

- prepare the candidate for COC examinations,
- inform him about the steps to be taken,
- inform him about the flowchart of the orthoptist profession in Canada,
- inform him about the orthoptist's obligations toward the COC, TCOS and the Association des orthoptistes du Québec (code of ethics, continuing education, annual rating, obtaining credits to maintain certification, etc.),
- provide him with a list of positions available in Quebec hospital centres,
- help and support him in his studies,
- provide him with the materials necessary to his studies (books to be consulted, photocopies of relevant articles, courses given to ophthalmology residents, conferences, question bank),
- evaluate the candidate's knowledge acquisition and progress every fifteen days by means of written examinations under conditions similar to the COC's,
- give oral examinations on a regular basis throughout the practical stage,
- organize clinical activities adjusted to the candidate's examination results.

PIFO dispenses no theoretical course; its role is to guide the intern in his preparatory studies for COC examinations so that he may obtain a diploma equivalent to the orthoptist diploma he already holds.

Complementary information:

Language

Knowledge of English is a prerequisite.

The candidate must be familiar with English, even though bilingualism is not compulsory. Indeed, the conferences, articles, all the books used and recommended are in English, and preparing for examinations is done on the basis of those reference manuals. During his practice, particularly in Montreal, the orthoptist may have occasion to work with an anglophone clientele. However, the candidate may pass his examinations in the language of his choice, i.e., French or English.

Examinations: conditions, dates and locations

Written tests are taken in early May in a PIFO establishment. The examination lasts three hours and contains 150 multiple choice questions covering the entire program. The passing mark is 70%.

Only success in the written examination gives the candidate access to the oral and practical tests that take place in mid-June. Those tests are taken in the same city as the Annual Convention of the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS), and thus in a different location across Canada each year.

Costs:

Fees of \$2,000 Canadian apply to this program.

Positions to be filled and the work organization:

One of PIFO's roles is to announce the positions to be filled in the various Quebec hospital centres, through the Association des Orthoptistes du Québec (AOQ).

The candidate may obtain an orthoptist position in Quebec only after obtaining COC certification.

**ONLY COC-CERTIFIED ORTHOPTISTS
ARE OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED TO PRACTICE IN CANADA.**

Useful links:

- Canadian Orthoptic Council:
http://www.orthopticscanada.org/french/index_f.htm
- Canadian Orthoptic Society:
<http://www.tcos.ca/french/index.php?lang=french>
- Association des médecins ophtalmologistes du Québec:
<http://www.amog.org/>