



Canadian Orthoptic Council
Continuing Education
Guidebook

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Introduction

It is understood that continuing education (CE) is the cornerstone of maintenance of professional excellence. All Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC) certified members must therefore be able to demonstrate their involvement in educational activities to maintain certification. This is assessed once every three years when members are required to submit details of their educational activities.

Whilst all educational activities are valuable, it is recognized that certain topics have greater relevance to orthoptics; these are termed *core* topics and greater emphasis is placed on these when assessing an individual's CE activities.

Core Subjects:

The following topics are considered core subjects for the purpose of CE credits.

- Ocular anatomy and neuroanatomy
- Principles of visual fields, including testing and analysis
- Sensory and motor physiology, including assessment of binocular vision
- Optics, including refractometry, diagnostic and therapeutic use of prisms and contact lenses
- Assessment of visual acuity, accommodation, and fixation
- Detection and treatment of amblyopia
- Clinical assessment of strabismus, including:
 - Diagnostic evaluation and measurement
 - Congenital and acquired comitant forms
 - Incomitant forms (including mechanical and innervation disorders)
 - Syndromes (eg. Duane, Brown, Moebius, Congenital Fibrosis)
 - Strabismus associated with systemic disorders (eg. Thyroid Eye Disease)
 - Neuro-ophthalmologic syndromes (eg. Myasthenia, Parinaud)
 - Orthoptic Management and treatments
 - Principles of strabismus surgery
 - Nystagmus
 - Eye movement evaluation and measurements including saccadic velocity recording and electromyography.
- Child development and learning disabilities, including dyslexia
- Low vision assessment and low vision aids
- Electrophysiology principles and techniques including VEP, ERG and EOG
- Principles of genetics and heritable ocular diseases
- Clinical research methods, including computers in medicine and medical writing.

Other topics in the scope of ophthalmology are recognized as beneficial to the practice of orthoptics; as such, CE credits for topics that are not listed as "core" will be credited as "non-core" CE credit.

General Guidelines (reporting and auditing)

Orthoptists will be required to submit CE forms on a 3-year cycle (October 1st to September 30th). An email from the CE committee will be sent to members at the end of their 3-year cycle asking for forms to be completed. The CE form must be submitted to the CE Committee by the stated deadline.

- Please note that orthoptists will continue to receive an annual *recertification* form from COC in September or October of each year. This is separate from the tri-annual CE form that is issued around the same time. The recertification forms are to be submitted to COC's Administrative Coordinator before the specified date with the required fee for recertification for the following year. Do *not* send your CE form to the Administrative Coordinator.

No proof of activities will be required *at the time of submission of the CE form* except for late submissions. All CE forms submitted after the stated deadline will **automatically** be included in a CE credit audit without exception.

- Orthoptists are responsible for keeping proof of all CE activities claimed. Orthoptists should keep a copy of all paperwork for 1yr past the end of their cycle. However, for the purposes of your own record tracking, it is recommended that a copy of your submission is kept until your next reporting cycle.
- The Chair of the CE committee can, at any time, request proof of CE activities from any orthoptist.
- **10% of orthoptists submitting CE forms will be randomly selected every year for an audit of their CE activities.** They will be required to submit proof of all of their CE credit activities to the CE Chair within 2 months of receiving the request.

Final approval for a satisfactory passing of a CE submission or auditing thereof will be at the discretion of the CE Chair.

Continuing Education Credit Requirements

The CE credits are tallied over each member's 3-year cycle (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30).
A minimum of 30 credits is required for each 3-year cycle:

- **A minimum of 20 credits** must be **core** credits (see list of core subjects pg.3).
 - The requirement for 20 core credits reflects the high standards to which the orthoptic profession holds itself, so it follows that the standards for core credits are intentionally rigorous. It is through participation in CE activities that earn core credits that the standards of the profession will be maintained.
 - Whilst it is acceptable to list all of your non-core activities, you can only count a maximum of 10 **non-core credits** under the Total Credits tally on the submission form. This means that care must be taken to ensure that you have accrued enough core credits.
- **A maximum of 15 credits** are allowed for **self-study** activities.
 - Please note that “self-study” and “non-verifiable” are not interchangeable terms.
 - Note that self-study activities may be verifiable or non-verifiable and can be core or non-core

For an activity to be verifiable, there must be a certificate of completion issued. An example of a self-study activity that is verifiable would be reading a journal or viewing a webinar that then either requires a quiz to be completed and submitted, or issues a certificate of completion. This acts as proof that the activity occurred. Reading a journal with no such quiz would thus be counted as a non-verifiable activity.

- **A maximum of 10 core credits** are allowed from **non-verifiable** activities (e.g. reading a text or viewing a webinar that does not have an associated quiz).

Applying for Continuing Education Credits

Individuals and organizations may apply for continuing education credits from the COC for educational events. In order to receive credits, a completed application form along with an outline of the activities including topics, length of talks, abstracts and requested CE hours must be submitted with a non-refundable processing fee to the administrative assistant of the COC. The application form is available on the COC website www.orthopticscanada.org

The administrative assistant will ensure the application is complete and the appropriate fee is received. Once payment is confirmed, he/she will forward the application to the Chair of the CE committee for approval. The fee is payable to the Canadian Orthoptic Council. If the application is received more than 8 weeks in advance of the event, the application fee is \$30.00. If the application is received less than 8 weeks in advance of the event, the application fee will be \$50.00. The Chair will determine the validity of the application and the number of credits granted. The Chair will also determine if the topics will be granted core or non-core credits and inform the applicant of the decision by direct correspondence.

If you are organizing a meeting/event: you should ensure that you apply at least 8 weeks in advance. This allows attending orthoptists to know in advance that the meeting/event will count towards their CE requirements.

If you are attending a meeting/event: you should ensure that the course has been, or will be, granted COC credits by contacting the meeting's organizer.

Meetings/events that have not applied for COC CE credits will not be eligible for core credits.

If the meeting/event organizer has not, or will not, apply to COC for CE credits, then the attendee may apply directly to COC for approval and pay the application fee. TCOS members may request that TCOS apply and pay the fee on their behalf. This must be done no less than 8 weeks prior to the meeting/event.

Additional considerations:

- ❖ Events that the American Orthoptic Council (AOC) has awarded CE credits to will be granted COC credits at “face value” (e.g. COC will honour the credit allocation awarded by the AOC. For example, if an AOC event is approved for 6 core credits, the COC will accept it as 6 core credits. (Note exception: this will not apply to JCAHPO or ophthalmic technical education events as stated per below).

- ❖ Meetings/events (other than AOC meetings) that have not applied for COC approval will be granted 1:1 **non-core** credits with proof of attendance. (Note exception: this will not apply to JCAHPO or ophthalmic technical education events as stated per below).

- ❖ JCAHPO as well as other ophthalmic technical education events (whether meetings, webinars, rounds etc) will ***not*** be considered valid CE for COC purposes, regardless of whether they have been accredited by the AOC or not. The level that ophthalmic technical activities are taught at does not meet the educational and practice standards that an orthoptist is expected to maintain. Certified orthoptists are encouraged to pursue relevant CE activities that better reflect the core competencies of the profession and that will enhance their knowledge and better inform their clinical practice.

- ❖ Orthoptists who decide to pursue medical school, master’s degrees, low vision certification or optometry school will not be awarded continuing education credits for those courses/schooling. The exception to this will be orthoptists who complete a Master’s Program in Orthoptics or Vision Science (see discussion on Pg.11)

Methods of obtaining CE credits

Accepted CE credit activities are listed below. The number of credits is based upon the number of hours spent on each activity and their educational merit. The ratios for each activity will be expressed as number of credits awarded to number of hours spent. e.g. 1:2 ratio means that one credit is given for every 2 hrs spent on the activity.

1. Attendance at meetings/conferences/lectures/symposia

This is a list of meetings that COC would consider for accreditation. Note that this list is not exhaustive, and attendance at any of these events does not automatically confer credits - the meeting organizers are required to apply to COC in advance for accreditation and for the purposes of core vs non-core credit allocation.

Meetings and courses

- 1.1. The Canadian Orthoptic Society (TCOS) scientific session & strabismus workshop
- 1.2. The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) annual meeting
- 1.3. The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) pediatric ophthalmology & strabismus sessions
- 1.4. American Association of Certified Orthoptists (AACO) national or regional meetings and instructional courses
- 1.5. American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS) annual meeting and workshops
- 1.6. Strabismus symposia co-sponsored by AACO or AOC or TCOS
- 1.7. International Orthoptic Association (IOA) quadrennial meeting
- 1.8. International Strabismological Association (ISA) quadrennial meeting
- 1.9. Local strabismus and pediatric ophthalmology symposia held in Canada with COC CE approval
- 1.10. National orthoptic meetings held in countries outside North America, if approved or sponsored by the local orthoptic or ophthalmological organizations
- 1.11. Other meetings, not listed above, related to pediatric ophthalmology, strabismus, or neuro-ophthalmology may be eligible for CE credit with approval of the CE Chair. See note below.

Note:

- Orthoptists wishing to obtain credits for attending a meeting under 1.11 must request that the meeting co-ordinator provide details of the meeting to the CE Committee at least 8 weeks prior to meeting for determination of CE credit allocations (or ask TCOS to apply on their behalf).

2. Rounds

Attendance at hospital or university rounds in ophthalmology at a 1:1 ratio for a maximum of 5 credits per year. See note below.

3. Journal Club

Participation in journal clubs at a 1:1 ratio for a maximum of 5 credits per year. See note below.

Note:

- An employer (manager), Chief Orthoptist and/or the ophthalmologist must verify in writing the orthoptist's attendance and the topics/journals discussed at the meetings (so that the activity can be classified as core or non-core credit) for credits claimed under 2. and 3.
- Ophthalmic technical rounds/activities will not be considered valid CE.

4. Publications and Presentations

4.1) Publishing a paper in a peer-reviewed journal

- i. as first author = 10 credits
- ii. as subsequent author = 5 credits

4.2) Presentation of paper or poster at a COC-approved meeting (see list above) = 5 credits

4.3) Preparation of instructional course (e.g. workshop, seminar etc) at COC-approved meeting = 1:1 credit (e.g. 2 hr course = 2 credits for preparation)

5. Self-study activities (texts/journals/other paper-based or electronic materials):

A maximum of 15 credits are allowed for self-study activities.

5.1 Reading of any national orthoptic journal = 5 core credits (non-verifiable).

If an available quiz is completed and submitted, then an additional 5 core credits will be issued (for a total of 10 core credits. Activity becomes verifiable with quiz certificate).

5.2 Reading texts or journals on orthoptics, strabismus or pediatric ophthalmology

- 1:4 ratio, non-verifiable core credits, maximum 5 credits per year

5.3 Completion of AACO self-evaluation quiz = 5 core credits

- Apply directly to AACO Education Chair to get a copy of the quiz and pay fee

5.4 AOC Basic Science DVDs (<http://www.orthoptics.org/BSVideos.htm>)

- This credit may only be claimed once *every other* 3-year cycle (i.e. once every 6 years).
 - i. Non-verifiable core credit awarded 1:1 (i.e. 1 credit per 1 hour of activity) for watching the DVDs
 - ii. If the associated quiz is completed and submitted then 1 hour core credit is awarded per quiz. The viewing activity also then becomes verifiable.

5.5 AAO Basic and Clinical Sciences Course Manuals

Note that:

- Each can only be claimed once per 3-year cycle.
- The self-assessment quiz must be completed
- Only the current version of each manual is acceptable
 - i. Completion of AAO Basic Science Course Book 5 = 10 core credits (neuro-ophthalmology)
 - ii. Completion of AAO Basic Science Course Book 6 = 10 core credits (pediatric ophthalmology & strabismus)
 - iii. Completion of any other volume in AAO series = 5 non-core credits

6. Visit to another orthoptic department

1 hour core credit per half day up to a maximum of 5. Written verification by the chief/lead orthoptist at the department is required.

These credits may be claimed once per 3 year cycle.

7. On a ONE-TME BASIS only

7.1 Completion of S.A.I.T., Centennial College Course for Ophthalmic Medical Assistants (with certificate of completion) = 5 non-core credits

7.2 AAO Home Study Course for Ophthalmic Medical Assistants (with certificate of completion) = 5 non-core credits

7.3 Successful certification as JCAHPO ophthalmic medical assistant at:

- i. assistant level = 5 non-core credits
- ii. technician level = 10 non-core credits
- iii. technologist level = 10 non-core credits

7.4 Completion of a Canadian Orthoptic Master's program qualifies for 15 core credits

Note: COC will recognize a Master's in Orthoptics or Vision Science obtained outside of Canada on a case-by-case basis. The Master's thesis should reflect COC Core topics (refer to pg 3 for list. For example, a Master's in Hospital Administration would not be recognized). The orthoptist should contact the CE Committee in advance (certainly prior to the end of their CE reporting cycle) to ensure this activity qualifies to be included on their CE submission.

QuickGuide to COC list of approved CE Activities

MEETINGS/CONFERENCES/LECTURES/SYMPOSIA ([Sections](#) 1,2,3 pgs 8-9)

	Credit:Hour ratio	Verifiable	Core	Non-core	Maximum
Conferences etc accredited by COC		Y	As approved by CE Chair		----
Conferences etc accredited by AOC		Y	Accepted at face value ¹		----
Conferences etc not approved by COC or AOC	1:1	Y	----	Non-core only	----
Hospital or University rounds	1:1	Y	Determined by topics discussed		5/yr
Journal clubs	1:1	Y	Determined by topics discussed		5/yr

1. e.g. AOC approves 6 core credits, then COC accepts at 6 core credits ('face value')

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS ([Section](#) 4 pg 9)

	Credit:Hour ratio	Core	Non-core	Maximum
<u>Publications:</u>				
As first author		10		----
As subsequent author		5		----
<u>Presentations:</u>				
Paper or poster ¹		5		----
Preparation of instructional course ^{1,2}	1:1	Yes		----

1. Must be at a COC or AOC-approved meeting

2. e.g. 2hr course = 2 credits of preparation

SELF-STUDY ACTIVITIES (Maximum 15 credits; core + non-core combined) ([Section 5](#) pg 10)

	Credit:Hour ratio	Verifiable^{1,2} Y/N	Core	Non-Core	Maximum
Reading of any national orthoptic journal		N	5		----
Above with quiz		Y with certificate	5		
Reading other journals and texts	1:4	N	Yes		5 credits/yr
AACO self-assessment quiz		Y with certificate	5		
AOC Basic Science DVDs	1:1	N	Yes		Can only be claimed once every 6 yrs
Above with quiz		Y	1/quiz		
AAO Basic Science Course Manuals		Y – self assessment quiz <u>must be</u> completed			Can only be claimed once per 3-yr cycle
i. Book V			10		
ii. Book VI			10		
iii. any other volume				5	

1. Non-verifiable activities accrue to a maximum of 10 credits

2. Activities become verifiable if there is a quiz or certificate of completion issued. Eg. Reading a national orthoptic journal and completing the quiz is now worth 10 verifiable core credits.

OTHER ACTIVITIES ([Sections 6,7](#) pg 11)

	Verifiable	Core	Non-core	Maximum
Visit to another orthoptic department	Y	1/ half day		5 (claimed once per 3yr cycle)
On a ONE TIME BASIS only:				
Completion of S.A.I.T Centennial College Course for Ophthalmic Medical Assisant	Y with certificate		5	
AAO Home Study Course for Ophthalmic Medical Assistants	Y with certificate		5	
JCAHPO medical assistant levels:	Y with certificate			
i. assistant			5	
ii. technician			10	
iii. technologist			10	
Canadian Orthoptic Master's Program	Y	15		
Master's Degree in Orthoptics or Vision Science – obtained outside Canada ¹	Y	15		

1. Program must be approved by COC on a case-by-case basis. Orthoptist should contact CE committee to discuss ahead of time their Program to ensure Master's topic(s) qualifies for inclusion on CE submission.

COC Policy Regarding Failed Submissions/Audits

The CE committee reviews each tri-annual submission for content and credit allotment accuracy. Should submission deficiencies be identified, the committee will assist the orthoptist to amend the submission in an effort to satisfy CE criteria. If the submitting orthoptist's CE activity is still found to be insufficient, then the case will be referred to the Chair of the CE committee for further review.

All forms submitted past deadline are automatically referred for a full audit by the CE Chair. In addition, 10% of submissions are randomly chosen for a full audit. Full audits require the orthoptist to submit proof of all activity included on their form. Should any audit identify deficiencies that cannot be rectified, the orthoptist will be deemed as having a failed submission.

Process for failed submissions and audits:

The Chair of the CE committee will contact Orthoptists who have not met their CE requirements, outlining what the next steps are in the rectification process. In order to stay in good standing, the following actions will be required:

1. The orthoptist will need to make-up the credit shortage as **core credits**
2. In addition, the orthoptist will be required to accrue an *additional 5 core credits* from any approved source (refer to guidelines for list of approved CE activity).
3. The activity completed in points (1) and (2) above will be submitted, with proof, to the Chair of the CE committee within 12 months of the notice of the failed submission.
 - Note: credits accrued as a result of (1) and (2) above cannot also be included in the orthoptist's subsequent tri-annual cycle. They must submit 30 new credits to meet the requirements of that cycle.
 - Ex.: if an original submission only has 28 approved credits, the orthoptist must then accrue 2 credit shortage + 5 penalty credits (total 7 core credits) in the following 12-month period within a deadline set by the CE Chair. They then must accrue 30 new credits by the end of their regular subsequent tri-annual cycle.
4. The orthoptist, at their next tri-annual cycle submission, will be automatically included in a mandatory full audit.

Should the submission from (3) above still not meet CE requirements, the orthoptist will then be referred on to the Professional Practice Committee of the Canadian Orthoptic Council for determination of their standing with the COC. This determination may include being removed from the list of certified orthoptists in good standing. This determination will be made in writing and sent to the orthoptist via registered mail. The orthoptist must sign this letter acknowledging confirmation of receipt of this document, and return the signed letter to the Chair of the Professional Practice Committee.

Appeal Process:

An orthoptist can appeal the decision of the CE Chair and/or Chair of the Professional Practice Committee. There may be mitigating circumstances as to why the requirements were not met. The orthoptist is required, in writing, to explain their situation and is encouraged to also offer a plan of amelioration. This is to be submitted to the President of the COC within 30 days of the determination-of-standing decision.

The COC President will then convene an appeal panel consisting of the Executive Committee of the COC (President, President-Elect, Vice President, Secretary Treasurer). All panel members must sign a Conflict of Interest Declaration. Any member of the panel that has an actual or potential conflict of interest with the orthoptist in question (for example, currently is or may be a potential employer or coworker) must recuse themselves from this panel. The President will then select a replacement member of the COC who must also be without actual or potential conflict of interest. While the Chairs and committee members of either the CE or Professional Practice committees cannot sit on this panel, they may be asked to submit documentation and information regarding their decision at the behest of the COC President. The panel may also request additional information from the applicant orthoptist at any time.

The COC President must acknowledge receipt of this appeal request from the orthoptist by registered mail. The panel will be convened, and a decision made, within 45 days of receiving the appeal request. The panel members will receive copies of all documentation within 10 business days of receipt of the appeal by registered mail. Documentation will include: (1) the appeal request and relevant documentation, (2) decision letters from the Chairs of the CE and Professional Practice committees, (3) any other information/documentation requested by the President. A teleconference will be arranged within 21 days from when the panel receives their documentation for a discussion on the appeal. Although the appeal is administered via document review, when necessary either the Committee Chairs or the orthoptist may be asked to address the panel at the time it convenes.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final. It will be communicated to the applicant by the COC President in writing by registered mail (with a copy to the Secretary-Treasurer and Administrative Coordinator for the COC). If the appeal is successful, the orthoptist will remain in good standing, and will continue on with the regular requirements for certification, including maintenance of CE and submission of annual fees. Should the decision to be removed from the list of orthoptists in good standing be upheld, the orthoptist will be advised of their options.