

***Candidate Information Manual***  
***For***  
***The Canadian Orthoptic Council's***  
***National Orthoptic Certification Examination***

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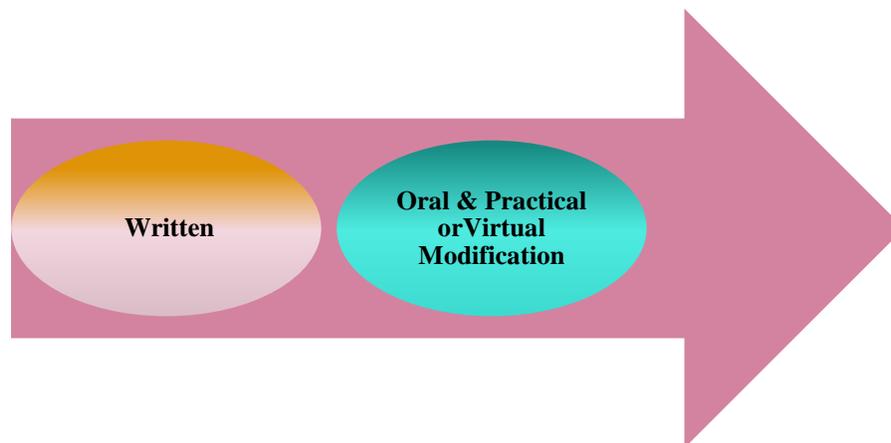
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## ***General Information***

Congratulations on taking the steps to become certified as an orthoptist by the Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC). The **OC(C)** credential is granted to orthoptists certified in Canada by the COC who meet established standards for orthoptic professional practice. Canadian Orthoptic certification indicates a professional has the appropriate entry to practice knowledge and clinical skills. This handbook is designed to provide information for individuals who are interested applying or have applied for the COC National Orthoptic Certification Examination.

The COC strives to achieve and maintain an examination process that is bilingual and national in scope. The COC examination consist of two parts: a written examination that must be passed to be eligible to challenge the second part of the exam involving skills, critical thinking and problem solving as related to orthoptic practice. The content of the examination adheres to the Canadian Orthoptic Syllabus and the Canadian National Competency Profile for Orthoptists. The examination will be consistently fair to all candidates. The COC reserves the right to alter these policies as necessary for future cycles of the examination.

### ***The 2 components of the COC National Orthoptic Certification Examination***



*Candidates must pass the written exam component (Qualifying Exam) before being eligible to attempt the second part of the exam.*

### ***Exam Eligibility***

The traditional route to Certification is intended for those who completed their orthoptic training in an accredited Canadian teaching program.

Graduates of the Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO) are eligible to apply to challenge the COC Orthoptic Certification Exam.

International orthoptists can be eligible to challenge the exam provided they have been granted eligibility through the Admissions and Training Committee of the COC. An application for eligibility is available on the Canadian Orthoptic Council website ([www.orthopticscanada.org](http://www.orthopticscanada.org) certification tab). Proof of a university degree in addition to orthoptic certification from the country of their origin is required.

## ***Examination Application***

Canadian Orthoptic Council applications are distributed to all accredited Canadian Orthoptic Programs and the Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO) and available on the website ([www.orthopticscanada.org](http://www.orthopticscanada.org)). Any application must include the signature of the Program Director of the Teaching Program attesting that the exam candidate has completed all the components of their education program. In the case of an International orthoptist seeking Canadian certification the letter of eligibility must accompany the exam application.

## ***Examination Accommodations***

Exam accommodations may be approved to reduce or remove barriers as a result of a disability, and/or other protected characteristics listed under Canadian Human Rights legislation. Accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis and vary depending upon the barriers identified by the individual challenging the exam.

Candidates must submit their written request along with their application to challenge the COC examination. The request can detail and may include but is not limited to the following items:

- a clear statement of the nature of the disability and its severity;
- a clear and concise description of the accommodation(s) requested;
- supporting documentation, from a healthcare or counseling professional which:
  - indicates an assessment was done on the candidate; and when
  - describes details of the disability including a diagnosis; and it's onset
  - describes the candidate's current functional limitation
- any letters of support for the request for specific accommodations made by the candidate

All medical and supporting documentation submitted will be kept confidential by the COC, and will be used for the purpose of assisting the COC in determining the suitable accommodations necessary for the candidate, if any.

The final decision regarding an accommodation request lies with the COC President, in collaboration with the COC Chief Examiner and Exam Committee. In making their decision, the COC must ensure that granting the accommodation request will not compromise the validity and integrity of the certification exam.

## ***PART ONE: The COC Written Examination***

The COC written exam is held on the first Wednesday of each May. The exam consists of 150 “A type” multiple choice questions. See the next page for sample questions. In the English version of the exam spelling is either in the American or British form. The allotted time for this exam is 3 hours and the exam will start at 09:00 am local time at each testing site.

### ***Written Exam Matrix***

<b><u>Exam Matrix</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage of the Exam (# of Questions)</u></b>
Amblyopia	10% (n=14)
Anatomy	7% (n=11)
General Ophthalmology	13% (n=20)
Motor physiology & strabismus	19% (n=28)
Neuro-ophthalmology, special forms of strabismus, restrictive strabismus	21% (n=32)
Optics	9% (n=13)
Pharmacology	4% (n=6)
Sensory physiology & strabismus	17% (n=26)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (n= 150)</b>

### ***Style of Questions***

The examination is entirely comprised of type “A” multiple choice with up to four (4) possible choices (stems). You have to select the **correct** option.

Examples of A-Type questions:

The first "way station" in the visual pathway from the eye, after there has been partial crossover of the fibers in the optic chiasma, is the

- a. superior colliculi
- b. lateral geniculate body of the thalamus
- c. visual cortex
- d. temporal lobe

Answer: B

A mother brings in her 9 month old daughter because she is concerned that her eyes are crossed. The pregnancy, labor, delivery and development are all normal. There is no family history of ocular abnormalities. Examination of the child reveals a flat nasal bridge and broad epicanthal folds. The corneal reflection is symmetric. The remainder of the eye exam is normal. These findings are consistent with:

- a. Pseudo esotropia
- b. Esotropia
- c. Exophoria
- d. Accommodative esotropia

Answer: A

## ***Strategies for Answering One Best Answer Single Items***

Read each question or statement carefully. Be certain that you understand what is being asked.

Read each option (stem) carefully.

Circling or underlining key words helps to narrow down the question's meaning. The correct answer will match every part of the stem, so pay special attention to negatives ("none," "not," "neither"), superlatives ("most," "best"), and qualifiers ("usually," "often," "generally," "may," "frequently"). Similarly, multiple-choice questions containing absolutes ("always," "never," "every," "always", "only") need to be used for an indisputable fact.

Look for the best choice and do not be misled by other choices that might be considered possible, but less applicable, than the answer considered correct.

If an option is only partially correct, tentatively eliminate it as incorrect. Of the remaining options, select the one that you believe to be most correct, and mark this answer.

## ***Pass/ Fail Score***

Only candidates who pass the written examination will proceed to the Practical/Oral examination. The pass mark for the written examination is 70%. This is an absolute mark there is no “bell curve,” and candidates do not compete against one another. Exam candidates will receive Pass/Failure results (no marks) and an indication of areas of strengths and weakness from the Chief Examiner.

Any candidate who fails to pass the written will not be invited to the next part of the certifying exam and will have to reapply to the exam for the next year. Any application must include approval of the Program Director of the Teaching Program or the Director of PIFO or a letter of eligibility from the Admissions and Training committee of the COC. This opportunity will be offered three times only following which the candidate will have to arrange for at least 2 months of training at an accredited Canadian Training program before applying to rewrite.

## ***Written Examination Results***

Candidates will receive their results by email within 1 week of the examination date. Candidates who provide an email address on their application form will receive an email message with their results (Pass/Fail & areas of strengths and weaknesses). Those who do not provide an email address will receive their results in a letter delivered by courier. Results will not be given by telephone.

***Results will be reported to the candidates and their Program Director if the candidate has signed the release on their exam application form.***

## ***Written Examination Instructions***

- Candidates must present on the day of the examination one piece of **government issued photo identification** (i.e. driver's license, health card, age of majority card or passport). The examination invigilator will check your ID and names against the list of candidates for the examination.
- Examination rooms vary from site to site and climate conditions cannot be guaranteed. Please dress accordingly; use layers so you can add or remove clothing as dictated by the room environment.

- In consideration of people who experience allergic reactions, asthma or migraine headaches due to chemical sensitivities, **please refrain from using scented products** such as perfumes, colognes, aftershaves, etc.
- Smoking is not permitted in the exam room. Clear water bottles with their wrappers removed are permitted. Consumption of any food is prohibited except for medical situations where the Chief Examiner has provided authorization
- Use of electronic devices are not permitted during the exam including but not limited to: cell phones, digital watches, smart watches, calculators, laptops, computers, tablets, recorders, cameras, ipods, electronic dictionaries, USB or memory sticks . **You are permitted to wear a watch with non-electronic features.**
- Simple foam earplugs are allowed and must be checked in with the COC Exam Invigilator upon entrance to the exam room. The ability to hear all verbal instructions, including exam start and stop times is the responsibility of the candidates, regardless of the use of earplugs.
- Candidates must provide their own pens or pencils
- Do not bring scrap paper into the exam room it will be provided for you.
- For security reasons, exam candidates may take to their desks only the following items: pens, their identification, a clear water bottle and their COC exam package given to them by the COC Exam Invigilator. All other items, including coats, jackets, purses, bags,, cell phones, should be put at a spot in the exam room as indicated by the COC Exam Invigilator. All cell phones and other electronics must be turned off. The COC cannot take responsibility for the safety of these items; students are advised not to bring valuables to the COC exam. Personal items may be reclaimed after the exam is finished.
- Examinations will be held on the same day in all examination centers. If candidates anticipate any difficulty in finding their way to the examination site on time, they are advised to go over the route thoroughly the day before, investigating the availability of parking space and making sure that they can find their way.
- All exam candidates should arrive at the designated exam room at 08:45 am to have their identification checked and to receive their examination instructions by the exam

invigilator. The doors of the examination room will be closed promptly at the hour set for the examination (09:00 am). Candidates who are late will be admitted to the exam room, but they will be restricted to write the examination within the remaining time.

- If a candidate must leave the room to use the washroom, they may not take exam booklets, papers, etc., out of the exam room with them nor bring books, papers etc. back into the exam room. They may not visit the rest room until the COC Exam Invigilator can provide someone to accompany them. No extra writing time will be provided.
- Exam candidates will be provided with individual exam packages that contain the following: a COC Examination Booklet; an Answer sheet; a Question Comment Form; a COC Examination Evaluation Form; and Scrap Paper for candidate use. Candidates are to verify that their packages contains the correct contents. **Examination packages must only to be opened when the COC Exam Invigilator instructs you to do so.**
- You must fill in the answer sheet in such a way that your choice of the **MOST CORRECT ANSWER** is evident. Should you wish to change an answer, erase or place a line through your incorrect response **and any extraneous marks. Only the answers indicated on the provided answer sheet will be scored.**
- The written examination is 3 hours in length and approximately 1 minute is allowed for every question; therefore do not spend too much time on any one question. Make sure you skip a space on the answer sheet if you skip a question. Be sure the question number in the booklet corresponds with the answer number on the score sheet.
- At the conclusion of the examination, all writing, including completion of the answer sheet, **will cease**. The COC Exam Invigilator will report any candidates who fail to observe this requirement. Candidates will be instructed to return their exam booklets, answer sheets, question comments forms and all scrap paper (used and unused) to the individual exam envelope provided.
- All inquiries and requests regarding exam procedures must be addressed to the COC Exam Invigilator. Raise your arm to make it known that you need to speak with them. Questions on the content of the examination are **not** permitted; if you encounter a problem with an exam question (i.e. typo, missing information, questionable interpretation) note it on the **Question Comment Form** provided in the examination

package. These concerns will be reviewed by the COC Chief Examiner prior to the final marking.

## ***Written Examination Appeal***

Exam candidates have a right of appeal. All appeals must be in writing. To make an appeal of the COC written examination, an exam candidate must have cause to believe that there was procedural error made during the administration of the written examination. No appeals will be heard based on exam content.

### **Procedure**

To make an appeal of the COC written examination the exam candidate must complete the appeal form found in their examination package or contact the Chief examiner by email the same day of the exam at [kiranjit.bassi@gmail.com](mailto:kiranjit.bassi@gmail.com) and outline grounds for the appeal.

## ***PART TWO: The Digital/Virtual Modification of the Oral/Practical Examination***

### ***A. The Virtual Oral/Practical Examination***

- Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, all practical (in person) exam components of the 2021 Canadian Orthoptic Council examinations have been cancelled. Instead, all candidates will be required to complete a Virtual Oral/Practical Examination, modified to include additional questions which assess the candidate's clinical/practical skills and knowledge.
- The Virtual Oral/Practical Examination will consist of a **90-minute** question and answer period conducted by a pair of examiners via zoom (ophthalmologist & orthoptist).
- All candidates will be asked standardized questions which will be prompted by use of photos of patients or with the use of actual diagnostic test results.
- The oral examination is used primarily to evaluate how well candidates can apply their knowledge (comprehension, interpretation, judgment, and ability to plan an investigation and sound course of treatment).
- They should verbally present their differential diagnosis and emphasize which findings have led them to their conclusion.
- COC examiners place importance in candidates' ability to practice safely and manage three (3) **critical areas**:

1. Orthoptic treatment;
2. Recognition of neurological disorders, and;
3. The detection and management of leukocoria

### Sample Oral Style Picture



Practical exam questions will assess the candidate's practical skills and knowledge in the following clinical management areas:

1. Sensory exam
2. Motor exam
3. Diplopia assessment & Management
4. Synoptophore/ARC exam

### Sample Practical Style Question

History: A 55 year old presents with a complaint of vertical diplopia for several years and no precipitating event

Exam findings: You measure RHT 6PD at both near and distance in pp.

Diplopia assessment: You try to fuse his images with prisms but he just isn't able to fuse.

**What might this be?**

### ***Tips for Success:***

- Take time to look at the photo first before answering. Pause and gather your thoughts.
- Actively listen to the entire question. Don't jump to rush judgements that you know the answer without listening to the entire question.
- Make sure you understand the question. If not, have the question repeated or rephrased.
- Answer what **is asked**. Avoid rambling.
- Don't hesitate to ask for additional information to help you respond
- Describe what you see in the picture and do **use appropriate ophthalmic terminology**.
- Describe extraocular motility in a **logical fashion**.
- If asked for a potential diagnosis provide what **is most plausible**. If asked to provide a differential diagnosis start by providing what is the most plausible differential first.
- Listen to the examiners responses. They will provide information to help you answer the question asked. The examiner will not attempt to trick you. They may however withhold information because you are meant to manage the case on the basis of the information they have provided.

**Please do not ask the examiners for feedback on your responses.**

### ***Virtual Oral/Practical Exam Instructions***

#### **BEFORE YOUR EXAM:**

##### **1. Download Zoom:**

- One (1) week before your scheduled exam date, the COC Exam Chair will send you a **Zoom Meeting** link.
  - If you are not familiar with Zoom or do not have access to the platform, please start off by downloading the program, and familiarize yourself with it, well in advance of your exam day.
  - For guidance on how to join a Zoom meeting visit:  
<https://youtu.be/hlkCmbvAHQQ>

## 2. Test Meeting:

- The COC Exam Chair will schedule a 'Zoom Test Meeting' with you at least one (1) week prior to your oral exam date.
- The test meeting will allow you to test the Zoom platform and obtain additional information/clarification about the examination process, if needed.

## 3. Equipment Requirements:

- Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to the necessary equipment so that you can complete your oral exam.
- In order to conduct the examination effectively, the examiners must be able to clearly hear and see you. As such, it is strongly recommended that you use a computer/laptop for optimal conditions. Alternatively, if you do not have access to a computer/laptop, please feel free to use a smartphone.

### Recommended Equipment:

- A computer/laptop with a built-in or external webcam, or a smartphone with a functioning camera;
- Ensure the computer/laptop/smartphone is fully charged or connected to a power outlet to avoid any battery related disruptions;
- A steady internet connection; and
- Headphones/headset for the best possible sound quality (recommended but not required).

## 4. Zoom Etiquette & Tips:

- Professional attire is expected – business casual is acceptable.
- Choose a quiet area for your exam to limit distractions/interruptions.
- Ensure that you are in a room with a reliable/steady internet connection.
- Select a room with good lighting – however, avoid sitting directly in front of a window, as it can impact lighting on screen.

## EXAMINATION DAY

### 1. Registration:

- On the day of your exam, you will be required to register with a **government issued I.D. with a signature** (e.g. a passport, driver's license or provincial health card).
- Join the **Registration Waiting Room** by clicking on the Zoom Meeting link that was sent to you in advance of the exam.
  - Please ensure that you give yourself enough time to register and be ready to start your exam on time – extra time will not be granted, if you are late logging on.
- Once registered by the COC Exam Chair, you will be assigned to a Waiting Room where you will wait for your examiners to admit you into your scheduled oral exam.

### 2. Examination:

- Your examiners will admit you into the Zoom Exam Meeting Room a few minutes before your scheduled exam time.
- Please note:
  - There may be unforeseen delays during the exam process, so you may not be permitted access to the Zoom Meeting Room at the scheduled time.
  - However, do not be alarmed. Please continue to wait in the **Zoom Waiting Room**, and an examiner will grant you access as soon as possible.

#### In the Exam Room:

- When you and the examiners have all joined the meeting, the Oral Exam will begin.
- You will be allotted a total of **90 minutes** to complete the exam.
- Please note:
  - Zoom only allows one (1) voice to be heard at once, so there will be some pauses between asking and answering questions.
  - Rest assured, you will be graded solely on your answers, and not on how well you are engaging with the Zoom screen share PowerPoint. The examiners will be there to guide you, so do not worry if you encounter some technological issues along the way.

- Virtual testing is a new format for the COC Oral Examination, so patience and flexibility will be granted to all parties.
- When the exam is completed, the examiners will assign you back into the Waiting Room.
  - Please wait there until the COC Exam Chair is ready to share your results.

**Please note:**

- No electronic devices may be used during the oral exams – such as telephone, cellular phones, PDAs, laptops, etc.
- You are permitted to wear a watch without electronic features.
- Talking with your fellow exam candidates is **not permitted** while the exam is in progress.
- You are permitted to bring a beverage to your exam.
- To help the COC identify opportunities for improvement, all candidates will be asked to complete an evaluation of the exam process.

**Technical Problems During the Exam:**

- If the exam is interrupted due to technical issues and the connection is not quickly restored, please call the COC Exam Chair at **905-537-6324** right away to avoid any unnecessary delay.
- Note: all candidates are expected to call the Chair and flag the issue(s), even if the technical issue is not on their end, so that it can be addressed ASAP.

***Exam Re-takes***

- An overall score of 70% must be achieved in order to pass the oral exam.
- The Examination Committee has deemed that certain topics ('critical areas') on the oral exam are of the utmost importance and each area must be individually passed (70%) to pass the oral exam and be considered "safe to practice".
- If this is not achieved, the candidate will be allowed to re-take the exam immediately using a different team of Examiners.

**Absolute Threshold:** A re-take of an oral exam component is only permitted if the candidate's failure has fallen within an acceptable range. A candidate must have achieved

score of at least 65% in order to be retested. A candidate who achieves a score that is less than 65% will not be retested.

## ***Actual or Potential Conflicts of Interest***

To avoid any conflicts of interest you will not be examined by an examiner from your training program, from a clinic you have visited or by an examiner you have a relationship with (relative, friend etc).

## ***What language will the exam patient speak?***

Every effort is made to ensure that both English and French speaking exam candidates are matched with a volunteer exam patient who communicates fluently in their language. When this is not possible an interpreter will be provided (typically one of the bilingual examiners) who will translate **exactly** what is said without any elaboration or interpretation of information. In this instance an additional 15 minutes will be provided to complete the patient assessment to account for the necessary back and forth communication.

## ***When will I find out my Oral/Practical Exam Results?***

- When your allotted examination time is done, you will be required to remain in the Zoom Waiting Room while the examiners deliberate and score your exam.
- Once a decision has been made, the COC Exam Chair will admit you back into the Exam Meeting Room to give you your results.
  - **Note: results will be a pass/fail only – specific exam details will not be shared.**
- Certificates will be mailed to all successful candidates

## ***Copyright & Academic Integrity***

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of the Canadian Orthoptic Council. It is forbidden to copy, reproduce, record, photograph, distribute or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part. Communicating with your fellow exam candidates

and/or accessing study materials is strictly prohibited during the exam. Any violation of the academic integrity principles will be considered academic misconduct and will result in the automatic termination of your exam.

## ***Oral/Practical Examination Appeal***

Candidates who fail the oral/practical have the right to appeal this decision. The COC Chief examiner will provide all unsuccessful candidates with a letter that outlines the appeal procedure. The appeal must be made by the candidate in writing to the COC President within 30 days of the oral/practical exam.

## ***Examination Awards***

### **1. Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC) Award of Distinction**

Awarded to those candidates who achieve 90 % or higher in each of the components of the COC certification examination (written, oral and practical). Winners receive a certificate, an honorarium and their orthoptic program will also receive a certificate in recognition of this achievement.

### **2. The Canadian Orthoptic Society (TCOS) Academic Achievement Award**

This award is given to the candidate with the overall highest score on their combined COC certification written, oral and practical examination score. The winner and their orthoptic program receive a certificate. There is no monetary award. The candidate does have to have given permission on their exam application for their name to be provided to the Canadian Orthoptic Society for this award.

## ***Maintaining Certification***

All Canadian Orthoptists must apply to have their certification renewed each year. The COC secretary will contact certified orthoptists annually by email or by regular mail. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the COC has his or her most recent mailing address, e-mail address, telephone and fax numbers. You can contact the COC at [info@orthopticscanada.org](mailto:info@orthopticscanada.org) Every three years the COC will require you to submit proof of at least 30 continuing education credits. Do see the COC website for how you can obtain continuing education credits at [www.orthopticscanada.org](http://www.orthopticscanada.org)