

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

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**Appendix A (updated annually)**

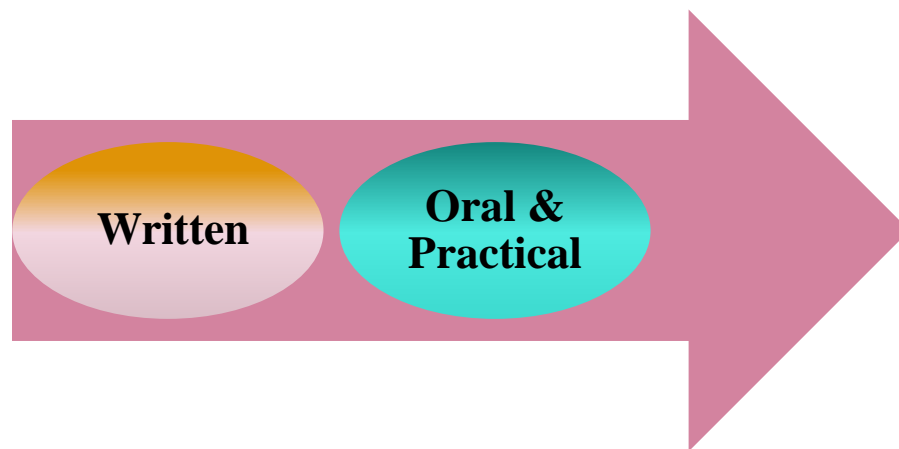
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## ***General Information***

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 oral/practical examination. The content of the examination adheres to the Canadian Orthoptic Syllabus and 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 national oral and practical exam.*

## ***Exam Eligibility***

The traditional route to Certification is intended for those who completed their orthoptic training in a Canadian program accredited by the Canadian Medical Association.

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

American or British Certified orthoptists are eligible to challenge the exam provided they can demonstrate proof of a university degree in addition to orthoptic certification.

International applicants other than US or British who have a university degree, orthoptic training of 24 months, proof of orthoptic certification are required to study in a Canadian accredited orthoptic program for a minimum of 6 months until deemed eligible to challenge the certification exams.

See the COC website for more information at [www.orthopticscanada.org](http://www.orthopticscanada.org)

## ***Examination Application***

Canadian Orthoptic Council applications are distributed to all accredited Canadian Orthoptic Programs and the Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO). 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. Others interested in challenging the COC exam should contact the COC for information on how to apply at [info@orthopticscanada.org](mailto:info@orthopticscanada.org)

## ***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 - 2015</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 be required to sit the exam the following year. Any application must include approval of the Program Director of the Teaching Program. 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 [karen.mcmain@hotmail.com](mailto:karen.mcmain@hotmail.com) and outline grounds for the appeal.

## ***PART TWO: The Oral/Practical Examination***

### ***Components of the Oral/Practical Exam***

#### ***A. The Oral***

The oral exam consists of an approximately 45 minute long question and answer period conducted by a pair of examiners (ophthalmologist & orthoptist pair different from the pair of examiners you will see for your practical exam). Candidates are asked standardized questions which are 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). COC examiners place importance in candidates' ability to practice safely and manage three critical areas: orthoptic treatment; detection of an evolving

neurological condition; and detection of leukocoria. Additionally the oral assesses the candidate's ability to communicate which is a crucial skill when speaking with patients, ophthalmologists, orthoptic colleagues and other health professionals.

### Sample Oral Style Picture



### *Tips for Success on the Oral Exams*

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.

**Do not ask the examiner for feedback on your responses.**

## ***B. The Practical***

### ***The Practical Patient Examination***

The Practical Patient Exam allows examiners to observe exam candidates in a clinical encounter. Examiners will evaluate candidate's history taking skills, diagnostic testing skills, thought process regarding potential diagnosis and management and their interpersonal communication skills and professionalism. Each candidate will have **45 minutes** to perform an orthoptic examination on a volunteer exam patient (with real signs & symptoms) in the presence of a pair of examiners (ophthalmologist & orthoptist pair different from the pair of examiners you will see for your oral exam). Your exam patient has been instructed to not reveal their diagnosis.

Paper will be provided in each exam room for you to record your finding. You will not be allowed to bring any paper/work up sheets into the exam room nor will you be allowed to remove any materials from the exam lane. Do note that you will be requested to perform a synoptophore exam during the patient exam. At the end of the 45 minutes the exam patient will be dismissed. You will be given a minute to collect your thoughts and then asked to provide a case presentation for the exam patient just seen. The case presentation will last 15 minutes.

### ***Tips for Practical Exam Success***

Approach your exam patient in an age appropriate professional manner.

Ensure you are well versed in how to adequately assess all potential diagnoses that you might encounter as an orthoptist and be sure you can demonstrate appropriate diagnostic testing technique.

Carry out your exam in a logical sequence

Use your time wisely and perform **the** diagnostic tests that will provide the information you need to provide your diagnosis and patient management

Practice by timing yourself in patient encounters

Practice by seeing patients that are new to you so you are not influenced by knowledge of prior testing and diagnosis

Do not ask your examiners for feedback during your patient encounter.

### ***Tips for Case Presentation Success***

**Start with a strong opening statement** – it should be succinct and provide a summary of the most important facts. Example: “Mr. A is a 19 years old male previously healthy who was involved in a motor vehicle accident 6 months ago and has been complaining of binocular diplopia with a vertical separation of the images worse on right gaze and left tilt since.

**Present in a logical sequence**

**Summarize testing results when you present** – for example “The patient had a large hypertropia which increased on PCT measurements on right gaze and left tilt.” Reserve presenting specific detail on testing if it is key to the diagnosis or management.

**Tell a Story** - Everything you say in a patient presentation should contribute to a larger story. Engage the examiners with relevant details that will help paint a more vivid story. Try to tell your examiners why this information matters and how it links together.

### ***The Retinoscopy Portion of the Practical***

Candidates will be asked to perform retinoscopy on both eyes of a dilated patient. No subjective refinement is required. Ten minutes is allotted to complete this task and to record findings. Loose lenses or the phoropter may be used for this task and the candidate may work

in minus or plus cylinder. Candidates may bring their own retinoscopes (spot or streak) or use the available retinoscopes in the clinic.

### ***Candidates must (for both Eyes)***

Determine the sphere power

Determine the axis

Determine the cylinder

### ***When recording the task the candidates must:***

Remove the working difference

Record the final sphere power

Record the final cylinder reading

Record the final axis

### ***Tips for Retinoscopy Success***

Be sure to practice under realistic conditions. Time yourself, practice on real eyes with normal media and pupils and master your chosen method.

Have an experienced individual set a standard on a real patient and test yourself against this standard. Aim to scope with an accuracy level of being within 0.50 D of the correct sphere, 0.50 of the correct cylinder and within 5 degrees of the correct axis. Your examiners will be deducting points for accuracy levels found to be lower than this standard for your sphere score, cylinder score and axis score.

Don't perform lensometry or autorefraction prior to practicing retinoscopy so you are not influenced by a known reading.

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

- Please report at least 30 minutes prior to your examination session, unless otherwise specified in your candidate appointment letter.
- At registration you will be required to provide a government issued photo identification with signature i.e. passport, driver's license or provincial health card. You will be given an examination ID which you will be required to wear for the entire examination.
- Following registration you will be guided to an exam candidate waiting room.
- To ensure confidentiality of the examinations, you will be sequestered in the exam candidate waiting room prior to your exam and in-between each component of the testing. This period could be from 15 minutes to several hours in duration. Details of the exam schedule will be sent to in your oral/practical appointment letter.
- **During sequestering, you may not go outdoors for any reason** (ex.: go to car, walk, etc.). No electronic devices may be used during sequestering, such as telephone, cellular phones, PDAs, laptops, etc.). You are permitted to bring personal reading material such as magazines or novels.
- 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.
- Water, pens, paper, facial tissue, hand sanitizer will be at your disposal in each of the examination room.
- You will find all exam lanes fully equipped. If you feel you are missing a piece of equipment that is needed for your patient assessment speak to your examiners.
- If you want you may bring the following items: a few synoptophore slides, your favourite fixation sticks, a pen light and a retinoscope. Please ensure they are clearly labeled as yours.
- **Examiners cannot give you any feedback regarding your examination performance or results. Do not approach them for feedback.**



- **You will be required to take a patient history during the practical exam but do not ask your test patient for their diagnosis.**
- Water, soft drinks, juice and food will be available for candidates.
- Professional attire is expected. You may bring a lab coat if you desire but it is not required.
- 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.
- Although we may store your bags for you, please note that the area is not secure and no responsibility can be taken for lost or stolen items.
- Following your examination all candidates will be asked to complete an evaluation of the exam to help us make improvements to the process.

## ***Results***

In order to pass the Oral/Practical Exam a score of **70%** must be achieved in each of the oral and practical components of the exam. Candidates will be provided with Pass/Fail (no marks) results verbally at the end of their oral/practical testing. Certificates are handed out at the scientific session of the Canadian Orthoptic Meeting which is held in conjunction with the Canadian Ophthalmological Societies annual meeting in Ottawa or mailed to successful candidates who are unable to attend this meeting.

## ***Exam Re-takes***

If a candidate fails **either** the oral or practical components of the exam they may be given a re-take exam with a different set of examiners. Candidates who fail both their oral and the practical examination will not be afforded a retake.

Absolute Threshold: A re-take of an oral or practical 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?***

Candidates who have completed all portions of the oral and practical exam will be taken aside individually by the Chief Examiner and told their results. You will be asked to quietly leave the exam site once you have been told your exam results and not return to the exam candidate's waiting room. Please respect that the exam may be in progress for other candidates.

## ***Copyright***

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.

## ***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)