

Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO)

(Updated November 2019)

Definition and objective:

The Programme d'Intégration Francophone des Orthoptistes (PIFO; or French Integration Program for Orthoptists) was created to help orthoptists with a diploma from a *French-language University in Europe* who wish to immigrate to *Quebec* pass the written and oral exams and obtain certification from the Canadian Orthoptic Council (COC).

Indeed, *only orthoptists certified by the COC are authorized to practise in Canada.*

Goal:

Address the shortage of orthoptists in Quebec and promote their recruitment.

Prerequisites:

The PIFO is offered only to people who wish to immigrate and work long-term as orthoptists at a hospital in the province of Quebec. (Private practice of orthoptics isn't allowed in Quebec.)

Applicants must have valid immigration papers, i.e., proof of Canadian permanent residency or a CSQ with a valid work permit.

Caution: a work permit providing access to healthcare professions is required. To that end, a medical examination is mandatory*.

PIFO eligibility criteria:

Applicants must:

- be Francophone;
- have a diploma from a recognized European Francophone *University* (and not from a *school* of orthoptics);
- have Canadian permanent residency (or a CSQ with a valid work permit);
- have received academic marks equal or higher than the Canadian average (70%);
- have a valid professional experience;
- have worked in a stimulating work environment;
- not have stopped working for more than three years;

- be familiar with the English language.

*The PIFO is in no way related to immigration or work permit processes, which are the sole responsibility of the applicants.

Procedures for eligible applicants:

Applicants must submit their *complete* file to the PIFO pre-selection committee (resume, copy of diploma, description of training, results of written and oral exams during their three years of studies, grades received for past internships, work experience and recommendation letters). This file should be sent to Sandrine Corlouer, PIFO Coordinator, at ninouille@live.com. Upon review of the file, if it is accepted, PIFO will forward it to the COC selection committee members, who will make the final decision.

Procedures for ineligible applicants:

For those applicants who do not meet the PIFO eligibility criteria, they must contact the COC directly. Orthoptists who were trained outside the country can submit their file to the admissions and training committee of the COC to see if they qualify for direct access to the Canadian Exam.

The application must be in *English* and should mention that a file has already been submitted to the PIFO, but that it was rejected and the reasons for the rejection.

Internships can only be done in English in all three teaching centres.

For more information:

http://www.orthopticscanada.org/pdf/Certification_Information_for_International_Orthoptists.pdf

PIFO internship structure:

The PIFO is made up of a nine-month internship, which begins in October. The internship ends on the date of the final COC exam.

The internship is done on a full-time basis during the first month (October), then three days a week – one day at each of the PIFO sites, which are all endorsed by the COC:

- Montreal Children's Hospital (paediatric hospital)
- Notre-Dame Hospital (regular hospital)
- Sainte-Justine Hospital (paediatric hospital)

After the first month of the internship, PIFO officials will check with each intern to see if they want to continue on.

Role of the PIFO:

Once their interest is confirmed, the interns will be able to take full advantage of the PIFO, which aims to:

- prepare candidates for the COC exams;
- provide interns with the required material (books, copies of relevant articles, classes given to ophthalmology residents, conferences, etc.);
- assess interns' knowledge and progress every fifteen days using written exams conducted under conditions similar to those of the COC exams;
- conduct oral exams on a regular basis throughout the internship;
- prepare clinical activities based on the results of the exams;
- inform interns of the organization chart of the orthoptics profession in Canada;
- describe to the interns an orthoptist's obligations to the COC, The Canadian Orthoptic Society (TCOS) and the Association des orthoptistes du Québec (AOQ): code of ethics, continuing education credit, annual membership, etc.;
- provide interns with a list of available positions in Quebec hospitals.

The PIFO doesn't include any formal classes. Its aim is to help interns prepare for the COC exams and obtain Canadian certification.

Other information:

Language

Knowledge of English is a prerequisite. Applicants must be familiar with the English language although they don't have to be perfectly bilingual. Conferences, articles and books that are used and recommended are all in English, and interns prepare for exams using that material.

During the course of their career, especially in Montreal, orthoptists might work with English-speaking clients. However, candidates can choose to do their exams in English or French, whichever one they prefer.

Exams: how, when and where

Written exams are done at the beginning of May at the Montreal Children's Hospital. It is a three-hour long exam with 150 multiple-choice questions, which cover the entire programme. Passing grade is 70%.

Only those who pass the written exam can take part in the oral and practical exams, which take place in the middle of June. These exams are conducted in the same city as the Canadian Ophthalmological Society's annual conference, which means they take place in a different location in Canada every year.

Costs

A \$2,000 fee is charged for the program. The payment must be made at the first registration meeting in September (or in two equal instalments, one in September and one in January). There will be no refunds for applicants who withdraw from the program.

An examination application fee of \$200 must be paid in January to the COC. Applicants must pay all travel expenses for the exams.