



COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS OF ALBERTA

College of Opticians of Alberta (COA) Continuing Competence Program (CCP) Information Guide

Opticians are entrusted by the public to provide safe, effective, and competent care throughout their careers.

Lifelong learning for professionals helps ensure that public protection and safety are paramount to their practice. Continuing competence helps the regulated professional achieve better patient outcomes.

The COA must administer a CCP that supports and encourages regulated members to maintain and improve their knowledge and skills and enhance their opticianry practices.

Continuing Competence: Self-Directed Learning Program

Competence changes over time — it isn't something you achieve once and keep forever. The CCP is a way for opticians to identify an area of learning that they have noted throughout their practice and find a way to enhance that area.

The CCP encourages registrants to focus on their own areas of practice, interests, and identified gaps, helping them choose professional development and learning that is meaningful and relevant to their work.

Competence Assessment

A competence assessment is a personal assessment of your own skills and knowledge. As a part of the CCP, you are required to assess your own competence as it helps you to determine what you want to or need to learn going forward.

The COA has provided you with an assessment tool to help you evaluate your knowledge against the Standards of Practice. Based on your self-assessment, you can identify areas for improvement, select a relevant standard, and choose a specific indicator to focus your learning and professional development. The assessment tool is not mandatory; however, it is designed to help you identify your learning needs.

FAQ: Why did the CCP change?

The COA undertook a comprehensive review of the Continuing Competence Program, including consultation with registrants and an environmental scan of continuing competence requirements across other health regulatory colleges. Based on this review, the COA determined that the program should be grounded in the Standards of Practice rather than entry-to-practice competencies. While entry-level competencies establish the knowledge and skills required for initial registration, the Standards of Practice provide the ongoing framework that guides safe, competent, and ethical opticianry practice throughout an optician's career.

Feedback from registrants indicated that the previous program was not intuitive, user-aligned with their professional learning needs. As a result, the revised program has been designed to better support meaningful professional development while remaining relevant to contemporary practice.

You will be asked to assess your skills based on your practice setting—if you dispense eyeglasses only, you will assess your skills based on eyeglasses. If you are a contact lens dispenser, you will be asked to assess your skills on contact lens dispensing.

If you perform refractions, you can assess your knowledge on refractions by selecting the Refraction standard of practice. Your learning activity would focus on that standard.

Continuing Competence Program Details

The new CCP requires opticians to update their CCP every year. The first cycle will be due November 30, 2027, for the 2028 practice year. The program has been divided into three sections: Knowledge, Skills, and Judgement.



Knowledge

The Knowledge section focuses on expanding your understanding of professional practice and standards. You will select from the drop-down menu that includes Standards that could be applied to the CCP.

Once you have determined which Standard you wish to enhance your learning on, you will select an “indicator”. This is a subsection of the overarching standard and what you will base your learning activity on. Please note this is not a full list of the indicators—those can be found on the website.

Next, you will find a learning activity that suits your learning style that helps you enhance your learning about your chosen standard. Alternatively, if you have a learning opportunity that presents itself, you can use that activity and determine which standard of practice and indicator it best applies to. The learning activity should be something that has enhanced your understanding of the standard you have selected and applies to your practice.

FAQ: What do I need to do to assess my practice?

The self-assessment is intended to help you reflect on your own practice and identify opportunities for professional growth. To support this process, the COA has provided an assessment tool to help you determine which Standard of Practice may be most relevant to your learning needs under the Knowledge tab.

For the Skills tab, consider a skill that you would like to strengthen, refresh, or further develop. This may be based on your own reflection, feedback from a colleague or employer, changes in practice, or the introduction of new technologies or procedures.

It is important to remember that the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) is designed to support ongoing learning and professional development—it is not a substitute for maintaining competence in day-to-day practice. As a regulated health professional, you are responsible for ensuring you have the knowledge, skills, and judgment necessary to perform any activity within your scope of practice. If you encounter a task or situation for which you do not feel competent, you are expected to seek additional education, supervision, or assistance from someone who has the appropriate expertise before proceeding.

If your learning activity provides Continuing Education Units (CEUs), you can record the number of units earned. While CEUs are not required for the Continuing Competence Program, the CCP portal includes a section where you can track and maintain a record of your completed CEUs.



Skills

The Skills section focuses on improving practical skills through self-assessment and professional development. Your skills section will be divided based on the type of license you hold:

Registered Opticians (Eyeglass only)	Registered Contact Lens Practitioners
- Choose one skill from the drop down menu - Select a learning activity to meet that skill - Identify what was learned and how it will be applied to your practice.	- Choose one skill from the drop down menu - Select a learning activity to meet that skill - Identify what was learned and how it will be applied to your practice.

The skill categories have been intentionally designed to be broad, giving you flexibility to choose learning activities that are meaningful and relevant to your practice. As part of this process, you are encouraged to honestly reflect on your professional practice and identify a skill you would like to strengthen or develop further. This reflection may be informed by a past experience, emerging technologies, feedback from colleagues, changes in practice, or other factors that have highlighted an opportunity for growth. The goal is to support continuous learning, enhance your professional competence, and ultimately improve the care you provide to your patients.

FAQ: What if I am a CLP but want to also choose a learning activity on eyeglasses?

If you participate in a learning activity related to eyeglass dispensing and feel it is relevant to your professional development, you may use it to fulfill the Knowledge section of your CCP. Simply select the Standard of Practice indicator that best aligns with the learning activity (for example, Indicator 2.4: An optician must only perform tasks for which they have sufficient knowledge, skill, and judgment to perform competently and safely).

However, if you hold a contact lens practice permit, you must select a skill from the Contact Lens Skills section to complete the Skills portion of your CCP. This ensures that your continuing competence activities support all aspects of your authorized scope of practice.



Judgement

The Judgement section is where you bring your learning together and reflect on its impact on your practice. This section asks you to consider how your learning activities will support the care you provide to patients by identifying what you learned, how you plan to apply that knowledge or skill in your practice, and how it may contribute to improved patient outcomes.

This reflection does not need to be lengthy or detailed. A few thoughtful statements that clearly connect your learning to your professional practice and patient care are all that is required.



COLLEGE OF OPTICIANS
OF ALBERTA