

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Fazal Khan, Registrar

DATE: December 4, 2023

SUBJECT: Registration Exam Outsourcing

☐ For Decision

☐ For Information

☐ Monitoring Report

Purpose:

For information only.

The College administration is considering divesting itself of most administrative functions regarding the registration examination to NACOR. This briefing note will provide context and rationale as to why this is being considered.

Background:

Prior to 2006, the College of Opticians developed, maintained, and administered the Entry to Practice Registration Examination (Exam) completely in-house. This process required an active Examinations Committee that relied on committee members to create and mark the Exam and College staff to arrange logistics. This Exam was often the subject of debate and concern with candidates and educators who were critical of content and format.

With the implementation of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) in 2002, which allowed the free movement of health care workers across jurisdictions in Canada, it was recognized that the development of a nationally agreed upon set of Entry to Practice Competencies and corresponding Examination would create consistency in skill and licensure while enhancing transparency to candidates and educational institutions as to what the entry to practice requirements were for opticians, regardless of jurisdiction.

For the past 18 years the College has co-administered the National Examination in partnership with NACOR. NACOR has been responsible for exam development, maintenance, and grading while the College is responsible for logistics including the procurement of venues, examiners, and models. Functions such as payments, hotel bookings and catering also fall under the duties of the College. Under this model, the College received 50% of Exam revenue to offset these expenses. While the College strives for a cost recovery model, annually, the Exam administration (hard costs only) typically resulted in a surplus of \$20-\$40K annually, not accounting for staff time.

For Consideration:

With the introduction of a third examination session, offered in French and the continued rising venue and hotel costs, it is quickly becoming evident that from an administrative and cost perspective that the Exams are consuming critical College resources. NACOR has indicated that they will be expanding their own resources as they take on full administration of other province's registration examinations and will have the capacity to take on most administrative exam related functions now done in-house by staff. This would free up valuable staff time to undertake growing policy work related to the incoming updated Registration Regulation as well as concentrating on further shortening application processing times.

The College would still have a voice with respect to the development and refining of the National Exam through the participation of the provincial National Examinations Committee (NEC) representative as well as having oversight at Exam sessions through the provincial Chief Examiner.

Currently, the administrative team is working with NACOR to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to address requirements such as the training and qualification of examiners, accessibility issues such as venue location and factors that address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Divesting of the examinations would reduce draws on the College's financial and human resources. It would add a further degree of separation between the College who is responsible for licensure and NACOR who is charged with setting and administering the Entry to Practice examination. This move would further clarify roles for applicants who are often confused as to whom to contact with respect to the exams.

Public Interest Considerations:

It is paramount that the public has trust in the licensing process for registered opticians. The NACOR examination is developed in conjunction with subject matter experts as well as subjected to rigorous psychometric scrutiny. The exam is administered consistently across Canada (except for Quebec) and is regularly reviewed by the national examinations committee. Divesting the examinations fully would further enhance the integrity and defensibility of the examination.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations:

To move forward, the College would require NACOR, as its vendor to be in alignment with the COO's commitment to DEI with respect to the delivery of the examination as it applies to applicants and staff. These expectations are already in effect as the COO is co-administering the examination and the expectation is that this would carry forward.

Recommendations/Action Required:

This report serves as an update to the Board of Directors and requires no action.