

<b>HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
<b><u>GUIDELINES FOR BOARD EXAMINATIONS</u></b>	Version 1
<b>PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR OPTOMETRY AND DISPENSING OPTICIANS</b>	
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Approved by: **HPCSA PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR OPTOMETRY AND DISPENSING OPTICIANS**

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Date of next review	Date reviewed	Reviewed by	Action
	10 June 2020	ETRC	
	25 April 2023	ETRC	Addition to section 12.2
April 2025			

## 1. PURPOSE

This guideline is intended to:

- 1.1 Assist an applicant who wishes to register as an Optometrist and/or Dispensing Optician with the Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians (PBODO) of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and practice the profession in South Africa.
- 1.2 Outline the process to be followed by both the applicant and PBODO for the purpose of undertaking and or conducting a Board examination.
- 1.3 Identify and guide the relevant parties on the required tasks in the application process.

## 2. SCOPE

This guideline applies to the following categories of professionals:

- 2.1 Foreign qualified Optometrists and/or Dispensing Opticians who wish to be registered with the HPCSA in terms of the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 (hereafter referred to as “the Act”), and practice the profession in South Africa.
- 2.2 South African qualified Optometrists and/or Dispensing Opticians who were de-registered for more than 5 years and wish to re-register with PBODO of the HPCSA in terms of the Act, and practice the profession in South Africa.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply:

- 3.1 **Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians** - a Professional Board as established in terms of section 15 of the Act.
- 3.2 **Board Examination** – A theoretical and/or practical examination which tests the knowledge and skills of the profession as approved by the PBODO with the aim of registration as an Optometrist and/ or Dispensing Optician to practice in South Africa
- 3.3 **Deputy Company Secretary** - Manager of the Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians.
- 3.4 **Register** - as defined in the Act.
- 3.5 **Qualifications** - as defined in the Act.

3.6 **Foreign qualified** - Qualifications obtained in countries other than South Africa.

#### 4. **ABBREVIATIONS**

4.1 **IELTS** - International English Language Testing System

4.2 **FWMP** - Foreign Workforce Management Programme

4.3 **ODO** – Optometry and Dispensing Opticians.

4.4 **PBODO** - Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians.

4.5 **SOP** - Standard Operating Procedure.

4.6 **SAQA** - South African Qualifications Authority

#### 5. **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

5.1. Applications submitted by **facsimile (fax)** will not be accepted.

5.2. The Board examination application fee must be paid. Reference may be made to the latest fees payable as published.

5.3. In order to avoid delays in the processing of applications, the application must be submitted **in one batch**, with **all the documents certified correctly** as per requirements of the Board (refer to item 6 below, SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS TO THE HPCSA).

5.4. All documentation required by the Board should be submitted in English. Where applicable, only original translations of the required documents done by a sworn translator and duly sealed and notarized will be accepted. In addition to such English translations, legible copies of the original documents, certified and duly sealed by a Notary Public should be submitted.

5.5. A notification regarding any further documentation that may be required will be made within one month of receipt of the application prior to processing the application.

#### 6. **PREREQUISITES/ PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

6.1. Foreign qualified Optometrists and/or Dispensing Opticians who wish to register with the PBODO of the HPCSA must:

- Hold a qualification equivalent to the recognised South African Optometry and/or Dispensing Opticians qualification under the ambit of the Board, i.e., Bachelor of Optometry or Diploma in Optical Dispensing.

- Have all the relevant academic qualifications evaluated by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), in order to determine their status in relation to the recognized qualifications. A request for an evaluation should be submitted to SAQA. For more details on the submission process, applicants are advised to visit SAQA's website - [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za) or contact SAQA directly.
- Submit official documentary evidence of having completed the required practical (portfolio of evidence indicating clinical hours and patient/case numbers while training) as it relates to the professional qualification in their country.
- If the qualification was obtained in any other language except in English, a certificate from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) demonstrating the applicant's English Proficiency. An overall **Band score 6** must be obtained, with the exception of the 'Speaking' section, where a score of a minimum of 7 must be obtained.

## 7. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS TO THE HPCSA.

Candidates are legible to sit for the board examination once they have met all the requirements as stated in the guideline relevant to their need to register with HPCSA, and that would either be:

- The guideline for restoration of Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, or
- The guideline for registration of foreign qualified Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians.

### **Submission of applications/Enquiries:**

Duly completed application forms and supporting documents or written enquiries may be sent to:

The Registrar  
 HPCSA  
 P O Box 205  
 PRETORIA  
 0001

## 8. BOARD EXAMINATION PROCESS

- 8.1. An examination fee is payable prior to taking the Board examination.
- 8.2. **Fees associated with Board examination/assessment are allocated as follows:**

*Reference should be made to the **latest fees payable as published.***

- Fee payable to write theory examination.

- Fee payable for skills assessment. It includes the use of all necessary equipment as well as instrumentation and drugs where necessary.
  - Re-application fee as above (should the second attempt not be successful).
  - Additional fees (e.g., for remarking) will be charged on a cost recovery basis, per paper.
- 8.3. An Examiner will be allocated (as appointed by the Board) upon receipt of the recommendation from the Board, that the applicant be granted admission to sit for Board examination.
  - 8.4. The Board Examination logistical arrangements (dates, venue, etc.) will be communicated with the candidate through the Education and Training Division. The applicant will be provided with the details of the appointed Examiner as well as the examination guideline.
  - 8.5. The main Examiner will arrange for the appointment of a Moderator and conduct the Board Examination.
  - 8.6. The main Examiner together with the Moderator will complete the **EXAMINATION REPORT** detailing the outcome of the examination and then forward the report to the Education and Training Division for further processing.
  - 8.7. Upon receipt of the Examination Report, the Education and Training Division will inform the applicant in writing about the outcome of the examination.
  - 8.8. A successful candidate will be recommended for registration in the relevant category as per examination report.

## 9. COMPETENCIES REQUIRED

*Reference may be made to the relevant Profession's outcomes competency document (Optometry or Dispensing Optician).*

- 9.1. Outcomes competencies (as required for local training, i.e., South African) for the relevant profession will be provided to the candidate. Both knowledge and skills will be assessed in the form of theory and practical/clinical assessments. Skills will be assessed once competency in knowledge has been proven.
- 9.2. An exception will be considered in cases where knowledge is relevant and current (has been active in the past five years) and evidence can be provided to support this. In this instance, the candidate may only be required to prove competency in the skills assessment.

## 10. THE STRUCTURE OF BOARD EXAMINATIONS

### 10.1. OPTOMETRY

#### 10.1.1. Theory section:

Two three-hour papers will be written and will cover all areas contained in the outcomes to practice the profession. The first paper will include 120 multiple choice questions. The second may include multiple choice as well as a number of short answer questions in order to probe application and understanding relevant to patient care setting.

10.1.2. Practical/ Clinical section:

Areas of assessment will include the required skills such as patient examination and management in general and more specific categories. These would include contact lenses, paediatric, binocular vision assessments as well as low vision and pathology. Diagnostic techniques and therapeutic skills including interpretation of the results will be assessed.

**10.2. DISPENSING OPTICIANRY**

Areas of assessment will include the required knowledge and skills of the profession of opticianry.

There are four main sections of the Board examination. The sections are aligned to the scope and outcomes for the required profession, these include;

Section 1 - Ophthalmic lens analysis and vertometry

Section 2 - Prescription analysis

Section 3 - Frame materials, lens materials, tints and coatings (transmission curves), frame adjustment and frame repair

Section 4 - Spectacle dispensing

***Candidates be given three (3) years to complete all components of the Board examination, this includes both theory and clinical components. Should a candidate not complete all components during these 3 years, they would be required to write a letter to the Board with compelling reasons why they should be given another chance.***

***Candidates will be allowed two (2) attempts to successfully complete all components of the Board examination. Further attempts will require a written motivation to the Board.***

**11. SITES FOR BOARD EXAMINATIONS**

11.1. A number of examination sites to undertake theory section are available and are linked to academic training centers. Systems to support online theory examinations are still in the developmental stage.

11.2. Sites for practical examination will be conducted at the accredited sites linked to the appointed Board examiners.

11.3. These sites will be confirmed during the application process.

**12. THE APPEAL PROCESS**

- 12.1. A candidate may appeal against the results after there has been consultations, remarking (where applicable) and/or review of the clinical evaluation has taken place.
- 12.2. The Candidate should submit the motivation (Appeal form) to the Education and Training Division within 5 working days after the decision/marks are made available.
- 12.3. The Education and Training Division will upon receiving the relevant documentation from the candidate and examiners, review the results and make recommendations to the Board.
- 12.4. If the appeal is successful, the Board will communicate the outcome with the candidate and provide a new date for the candidate to sit for special examination.
- 12.5. The Board through the Education and Training Division may seek assistance to facilitate the special examination from university experts where required, but the Board must be satisfied that such experts have no conflict of interest in relation to the matter under consideration.
- 12.6. Upon receipt of the special examination report, the Education and Training Division will provide the Board with the findings after which the final decision will be communicated to the candidate in writing regarding the outcome of the examination.

**Should the practitioner still not agree with the outcome of the appeal, he or she may appeal through Section 20 of the Health Professions Act “Right to Appeal”.**