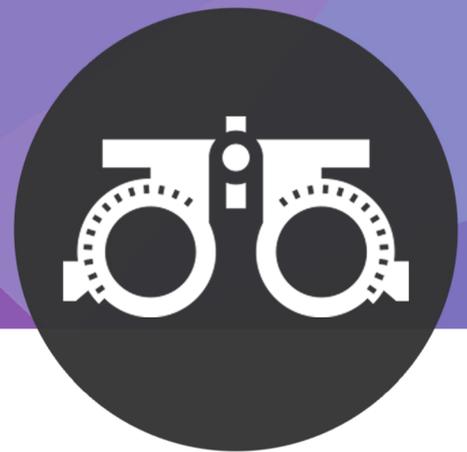


CANADIAN CERTIFIED OPTOMETRIC ASSISTANT

# PROGRAM GUIDE

2022 - 2023



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## 1.1 Introduction

An optometric assistant (OA) is an individual specially trained in vision care who assists optometrists in the provision of full scope optometric services to patients. OAs help optometrists provide a range of services in a more efficient and effective manner.

The Canadian Certified Optometric Assistant Program is a member benefit of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO). Our goal is to use the program to help optometrists improve the quality and efficiency of vision care they provide in their practice using highly trained personnel.

**The CCOA Program** is administered in Canada to OAs on the CAO members' behalf. As such, the sponsoring optometrist shall have access to their students' progress via the CAO Learning Portal. When necessary, the CCOA Program may contact the sponsoring optometrist with regard to the registrant. Registration with the CCOA Program is entirely dependent upon the OA remaining employed and sponsored by a CAO member optometrist for the duration of the program, including the CCOA Examination.

In an online remote learning course, most of the practical knowledge will come from hands on office experience under the guidance of a supervisor (optometrist). The course material will give the framework of knowledge upon which the assistant can build. Receiving guidance from the supervisor will allow for the integration of the academic and practical aspects of this program.

**A Canadian Certified Optometric Assistant (CCOA) certificate, valid for three years,** will be issued upon successful completion of all nine modules, full workshop attendance and CCOA Examination.

**CCOA Designation Maintenance:** To maintain the CCOA designation, CCOAs must pay an annual membership fee and submit a total of 18 hours of Continuing Education credits including CPR every three years (fee applies). If renewal requirements are met, a new CCOA certificate, valid for a further three years will be issued. Failure to maintain current CCOA status forfeits the legal right to use the CCOA designation, and the certificate is no longer recognized.

## 1.2 Required Resources

### **Full Course & On-Demand:**

1. CCOA Program Study Guides for each course module (available online).
2. Module Assignments (complete online).
3. Time Limited Quiz (complete online).
4. Practical Skills Checklists (download and print online).
5. Opportunity to routinely practice skills in the area of the optometric setting pertaining to the module of study.

### **The Basics:**

Students registered in The Basics do not need textbooks. All required readings will be provided.

### 1.3 Flexible Learning Options

The **Full Course and On-Demand Course curriculums and registration fees** include CCOA Program study guides & open-book assignments for all nine modules, practical skills checklists, practical skills Workshop and closed-book CCOA Examination.

**CCOA Full Course (begins in September of each year):** The nine modules are of four weeks duration per module. For the Full Course curriculum, the schedule begins with Module 1 in September (see website or CAO Learning for start date). Modules are back-to-back, finishing with Module 9 in the spring. The online CCOA Examination is written within three weeks of becoming eligible to write the exam (completed all nine modules and attended a workshop).

**CCOA On-Demand (begins any-time of year):** Students can register in the program at any time. The optometric assistant can begin studying right away and can move through the modules at their own pace. Modules can be taken in any order. From the day of enrollment, students have 24 months to complete all nine modules (quizzes, assignments and checklists) and attend a workshop. The online CCOA Examination must be written within three weeks of completing the nine modules and attend an in-person workshop.

**Individual Modules:** These modules are for those not interested in pursuing certification but interested in specific aspects of the CCOA program. Credit for individual modules can NOT be applied towards CCOA certification. Individual modules can be purchased at any time, and in any order. Students can also choose to purchase more than one module at a time. Modules purchased are accessible for 6 months. Individual module registrants are welcome to attend the Workshops for an additional fee of \$650.

## 1.4 Program Module Synopsis

The CCOA Program is designed to provide participants with an understanding of the fundamentals of optometric assistance. It will provide assistants with an in-depth knowledge of various equipment, procedures and techniques needed to function smoothly and efficiently in an optometric office.

**The practical skills checklist component** for most modules is intended to develop hands-on skills as the assistant applies the theory learned from the required reading. It is critical that the assistant is given the opportunity to work under supervision in the areas of the clinic pertaining to the module they are studying.

**The study plan, assignments and quizzes** are structured upon the learning objectives for each module. Assignment questions and quizzes are based on the content in the module study guides.

**CCOA Full Course and Individual Modules:** All module assignments and quizzes must be completed online and submitted via the CAO learning Portal by the deadline date indicated on the student's progress tab. A late fee of \$25 will apply to all late assignments/quizzes unless an extension is requested prior to the deadline. Undelivered assignments will be graded as zero. (See detailed information in the Module Assignment Standards section).

**CCOA On-Demand:** All module assignments and quizzes must be completed online and submitted via the CAO learning Portal within 24 months of the registration date. The deadline date to complete all components is indicated on the student's portal. Late quizzes will not be accepted and graded as zero. (See detailed information in the Module Assignment/quiz Standards section).

### 1.4.1 Introductory Course – Module 1

This introductory module gives an overview of the profession of optometry and defines the roles and importance of the 3 O's. Medical, ophthalmic, and optical terminology as well as ocular anatomy and physiology are reviewed. This module covers office procedures, such as customer service and administrative tasks including; patient intake and flow, scheduling and referrals, recall systems, and the management of patient records and privacy. An overview of the certification program as well as the role of the optometric assistant are discussed.

#### 1.4.2 Pretesting – Module 2

Covers preliminary optometric testing techniques including case history, visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, color vision, and stereopsis. Additional procedures such as eye drop administration, blood pressure testing, and infection control are reviewed. Automated instruments such as the refractor, keratometer, and non-contact tonometer are introduced.

#### 1.4.3 Supplementary Testing – Module 3

Introduces supplemental optometric tests including: visual fields, digital imaging systems (OCT, HRT, corneal topography, fundus photography) and pachymetry.

#### 1.4.4 Refraction and Ocular Health – Module 4

Explores common eye conditions, children's and senior's vision, pharmacology, triage and referrals. After this module, assistants will have a comprehensive understanding of eye examinations.

#### 1.4.5 Ophthalmic Lenses – Module 5

Provides a background in basic optics and covers ophthalmic lens designs, treatments, specialty lenses and troubleshooting. After this module, the assistant will be able to make recommendations and select the appropriate lenses to meet various patient needs.

#### 1.4.6 Ophthalmic Frames – Module 6

Techniques required to dispense and adjust ophthalmic frames including: learning frame parts, repairs, selection and troubleshooting. Frame inventory and communication with vendors is discussed. After this module, the assistant will be able to assist in appropriate frame selection and maintenance.

#### 1.4.7 Ophthalmic Finishing Lab – Module 7

Standard and automated lensometry as well as the lab work involved in producing a finished lens product. After this module, the assistant will be able to verify the quality of finished eyewear.

#### 1.4.8 Contact Lenses – Module 8

Ocular anatomy and physiology as it pertains to contact lenses. Types of contact lenses, care systems, hygiene, and insertion and removal techniques are reviewed. After this module, the assistant will have a thorough understanding of contact lenses, as well as the ability to instruct patient fittings and manage trials lenses and inventory.

### 1.4.9 Business/Retail – Module 9

Administrative processes such as sales techniques, and maintaining inventory, billing and insurance plans. Patient communication strategies for dealing with challenging patients is reviewed. After this module, the assistant will be able to manage the business of an optometric business!

#### **The Practical Skills Checklist**

Note that Modules 1, 4 and 9 do not include a Practical Skills Checklist as these modules focus on clerical skills. Links to the relevant checklists will be available on the students' CAO Learning Portal. The checklists should be printed. All skills listed are required learning objectives. The checklists are to be completed as the student works through each module session and must be submitted by the specified deadline. Each skill is demonstrated and examined by the sponsoring optometrist or a CCOA. The examiner must initial and date the checklist once each skill has been mastered. All checklists must be submitted via the student's CAO Learning Portal.

CCOA On-Demand: Checklists must be submitted for a module to be considered complete.

#### **Access to equipment**

All students are required to be trained to standards established by the CCOA Program Committee to be eligible to earn CCOA designation. This includes mastery of ALL skills in the checklist. If fulfilling some of the skill requirements within the clinic environment is problematic due to lack of equipment, it is recommended that the supervising optometrist locate an optometric office in the area for the student to acquire these skills.

### 1.4.10 Authorized examiners

All examiners must identify themselves by completing the information on the second page of the Practical Skills Checklists.

Examiners are restricted to:

- CAO member optometrist or;
- CCOA (Canadian Certified Optometric Assistant) in good standing\*, working under the direct supervision of the sponsoring OD.

#### 1.4.11 Module Assignment and Time Limited Quiz Standards

**Course grades** required to pass the course and receive a CCOA designation are as follows:

- Module assignments 65% (16/25)
- Time limited quizzes 65% (13/20)
- CCOA Examination 65% (65/100)

The purpose of the **open book** assignment is to facilitate the learning process as well as assess the assistant's knowledge and abilities in the optometric field. Each assignment consists of 25 multiple choice questions. Questions are based upon the **content covered in** each specific module.

The purpose of the **closed book** quiz is to test a student's knowledge and to prepare them for the final exam, which is timed. The quiz questions are based upon the module's required reading. The quiz consists of 20 questions, and students will have 25 minutes to complete it. A student will not have the flexibility to preview the timed quiz. Answer keys will be made available at the end of the module.

The **assignment** for each module is available online. Deadlines will vary depending on which stream the student is in (Full Course, On-Demand etc.)

The **assignment and quiz grades will be available on the student's progress window immediately after submission.** The Sponsoring Optometrist will also have access to a student's progress window in order to monitor grades and progress.

#### **Support from an Instructor**

Should a student need help with assignments, please contact us: [ccoa@opto.ca](mailto:ccoa@opto.ca). A CCOA Program instructor will not provide the answer, but can direct the student to the relevant location in the course material, and/or be available to offer guidance.

#### 1.4.12 Late Assignments/quizzes and requests for due date extensions

Module assignments and quizzes must be complete by the indicated due date. In the event that a due date cannot be met, the student is required to submit a written request for an extension prior to the deadline date. A late fee of \$50 will apply to all late assignments/quizzes unless an extension was established prior to the deadline date. Undelivered assignments will be graded as zero. The CCOA Program reserves the right to share related communication with the sponsoring optometrist. All requests must be emailed to [ccoa@opto.ca](mailto:ccoa@opto.ca) **prior to** the due date.

## 1.5 Workshop

The CCOA Program Workshop is designed to further develop a student's practical skills and to review the critical components of each module. The workshop provides students with an exciting learning experience. Each workshop is two days in length, usually held on Saturday/Sunday. The full agenda must be attended to be eligible to sit for the CCOA Examination. Workshop dates and locations are announced in October of each year. Workshops are generally hosted between January and March of each year.

### **Final Exam (not available to Individual Module Registrants)**

#### 1.5.1 CCOA Examination Standards

The CCOA Examination:

- Is online (via a student's learning portal)
- Is closed book
- Contains 100 multiple choice questions
- Has a two-hour time limit
- Covers general knowledge and content from all nine course modules
- Is NOT proctored
- Can be written from home

#### **To be eligible to write the final exam, students must:**

- Submit all practical skills checklists linked to each module.
- Obtain a minimum grade of 65% on each module assignment and module quiz. An unlimited number of tries will be granted until the student is able to achieve the 65% grade requirement.
- Attend the mandatory 2-day in-person workshop
- Remain employed by the sponsoring optometrist.

**Students must achieve a minimum grade of 65% on their final exam to obtain the CCOA designation.** If the student fails to achieve the minimum required grade, rewrites (maximum of two) are allowed within a limited time period (fees apply). Students who obtain an exam grade of 65% or more, will receive a PDF version of their certificate through the CAO Learning Portal.

### 1.5.2 Special Accommodation for the Exam

If a learning disability prohibits a student from taking the exam under standard conditions, special accommodations may be requested by sending the following to [ccoa@opto.ca](mailto:ccoa@opto.ca):

- a letter formally requesting and specifying the accommodation needed.
- a letter from a professional (e.g., physician, psychologist, rehabilitation counsellor) who is familiar with the disability that provides a formal diagnosis and outlines the required accommodation.

### 1.6 Cancellation & Refund Policy

Requests for cancellation must be received in writing by [ccoa@opto.ca](mailto:ccoa@opto.ca) within seven days of registration, subject to a cancellation fee of **\$300 per student**.

#### **No refund or credit will be issued for:**

- partial completion of the CCOA Program
- failure to graduate from the CCOA Program
- course materials
- workshop registration
- incidentals

### 1.7 Contact Us

Canadian Association of Optometrists, 234 Argyle Ave., Ottawa, ON K2P 1B9

Email: [ccoa@opto.ca](mailto:ccoa@opto.ca) | Voicemail: 613.235.7924 x 217