

CANADIAN CERTIFIED OPTOMETRIC ASSISTANT

PROGRAM GUIDE

FULL COURSE (2020 - 2021)



Table of Contents

1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Required Resources	3
1.3	Full Course Registration	3
1.4	Program Module Synopsis	4
1.4.1	Introductory Course – Module 1 (4 weeks)	5
1.4.2	Pretesting – Module 2 (4 weeks)	5
1.4.3	Supplementary Testing – Module 3 (4 weeks)	5
1.4.4	Refraction and Ocular Health – Module 4 (4 weeks)	5
1.4.5	Ophthalmic Lenses – Module 5 (4 weeks).....	5
1.4.6	Ophthalmic Frames – Module 6 (4 weeks).....	6
1.4.7	Ophthalmic Finishing Lab – Module 7 (4 weeks).....	6
1.4.8	Contact Lenses – Module 8 (4 weeks)	6
1.4.9	Business/Retail – Module 9 (4 weeks).....	6
1.4.10	Authorized examiners	7
1.4.11	Module Assignment and Time Limited Quiz Standards	7
1.4.12	Late Assignments/quizzes and Requests for Due Date Extension.....	8
1.5	Workshop	8
1.5.1	CCOA Examination Standards.....	8
1.5.2	Special Accommodation for the Exam	9
1.6	Cancellation & Refund Policy.....	9
1.7	Contact Us	9

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 TopClass, the CCOA 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 (NB: workshop will not be hosted in 2021 due to COVID-19), 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

Each Registrant must have:

1. Textbook: *System for Ophthalmic Dispensing, Third Edition*, Brooks & Borish
2. Textbook: *The Ophthalmic Assistant, 10th Edition*, Stein, Stein & Freeman
3. CCOA Program Study Guides for each course module (available online)
4. Module Assignments (complete online)
5. Time Limited Quiz (complete online)
6. Practical Skills Checklists (download and print online)
7. Opportunity to routinely practice skills in the area of the optometric setting pertaining to the module of study

1.3 Full Course Registration

The **Full Course curriculum and registration fee** includes CCOA Program study guides & open-book assignments for all nine modules, practical skills checklists, practical skills Workshop (*workshops will not be hosted in 2021, Full-Course fee has been adjusted accordingly*), and closed-book CCOA Examination.

The nine module sessions are of four weeks duration per module. For the Full Course curriculum, the schedule begins with Module 1 on September 14th, 2020. Module sessions 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).

Access to the latest edition of the textbooks is mandatory for all registrants to complete the course modules. Textbooks may be ordered online through www.lb.ca/cao. Both textbooks are available in e-book and hardcopy versions.

Full Course Schedule: Assignment, Quiz & Practical Skills Due Dates

	Content Delivery Date (available as of)	Submission Deadline
Module 1	Sept 14	Oct 12
Module 2	Oct 12	Nov 9
Module 3	Nov 9	Dec 7
Module 4	Dec 7	Jan 4
Module 5	Jan 4	Feb 1
Module 6	Feb 1	March 1
Module 7	March 1	March 29
Module 8	March 29	Apr 26
Module 9	Apr 26	May 24
CCOA Examination		Must be written by June 11 th , 2021
CCOA Exam Rewrite (fee applies)		Must be written by June 18 th , 2021

**Due date will be indicated on the student's CCOA Learning Portal. Note that the appropriate modules will be unlocked in the portal CCOA Learning Portal on the dates listed above.*

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 upon the required reading as listed in the study guide and course textbooks.

Each module assignment must be completed online and submitted via the CCOA learning Portal by the deadline date indicated on the student's progress tab. Late assignments will not be accepted and graded as zero. (See detailed information in the Module Assignment Standards section).

Each module quiz must be completed online and submitted via the CCOA learning Portal by the deadline date indicated on the student's dashboard. 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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 (4 weeks)

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 busyness of an optometric business!

The Practical Skills Checklist

Note that Modules 1, 4 and 9 do not include a checklist as these modules focus on clerical skills. The links will be available on the students' CCOA 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 deadline date associated to the module at hand. 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.

Submitting checklists

The deadline to submit the practical skills checklists are the same as the corresponding module deadline. It must be submitted via a student's CCOA learning Portal.

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

***NEW 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** module 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 to be answered by the assistant. Questions are based upon the **required reading** for the specific module component of the course, which is listed at the beginning of the study guide for each 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 required reading for the module at hand. The quiz consists of 20 questions, and students will have 35 minutes to complete it. The quiz must be submitted by the module deadline date.

The assignment for each module is available online within the module deadline date, at the same time as the Module Study Guide and Practical Skills Checklist (if applicable). A student will not have the flexibility to preview the timed quiz. Answer keys linked to each module will be released the day after each module deadline.

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. A CCOA Program instructor will not provide the answer, but will direct the student to the reference location in the course material, and can be available to offer guidance.

1.4.12 Late Assignments/quizzes and Requests for Due Date Extension

Module assignments and quizzes must be complete by the indicated due date or the assignment and/or quiz is forfeited and scored as incomplete and graded as zero. In the event that the due date cannot be met, the student is required to submit a written request for an extension including the reason. The CCOA Program reserves the right to share related communication with the sponsoring optometrist. All requests must be emailed to 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. ***Given the uncertainty regarding COVID-19 and our concern for the health and safety of both students and instructors, the workshop component of the curriculum for the 2020-21 Full Course cycle is being waived.***

Exam

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 three hour time limit
- covers general knowledge and content from all nine course modules
- Is NOT proctored
- Can be written from home.

In order 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 amount of tries will be granted until the student is able to achieve the 65% grade requirement.**
- remain employed by the sponsoring optometrist.

Students must obtain a minimum grade of 65% on their final exam in order 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 above will receive one copy of the CCOA certificate by mail. A PDF version of the certificate is made available online.

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:

- 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 within seven days of registration, subject to a cancellation fee of **\$200 per student**.

No refund or credit will be issued for:

- partial completion of the CCOA Program
- failure to graduate 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 | Voicemail: 613.235.7924 x 211