

Application Information and General Requirements- Optometrists with Overseas Qualifications

This document provides general information for optometrists with overseas qualifications seeking assessment so that they can register and practice as an optometrist in Australia or New Zealand. It also contains information for persons applying for skilled migration to Australia.

1. Assessment for Registration in Australia and New Zealand

Only persons registered with the Optometry Board of Australia (OptomBA) or the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board in New Zealand (ODOB) are permitted to practise optometry in Australia or New Zealand. Registration information is available on the OptomBA website at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process.aspx> and on the ODOB website at https://www.odob.health.nz/registration_information

Graduates of accredited Australian and New Zealand programs of study in optometry are eligible to apply for registration in Australia and in New Zealand. The approved courses are listed on the OptomBA website at www.optometryboard.gov.au/accreditation and on the ODOB website at <https://www.odob.health.nz/i-want-to-register/register-as-an-optometrist/>

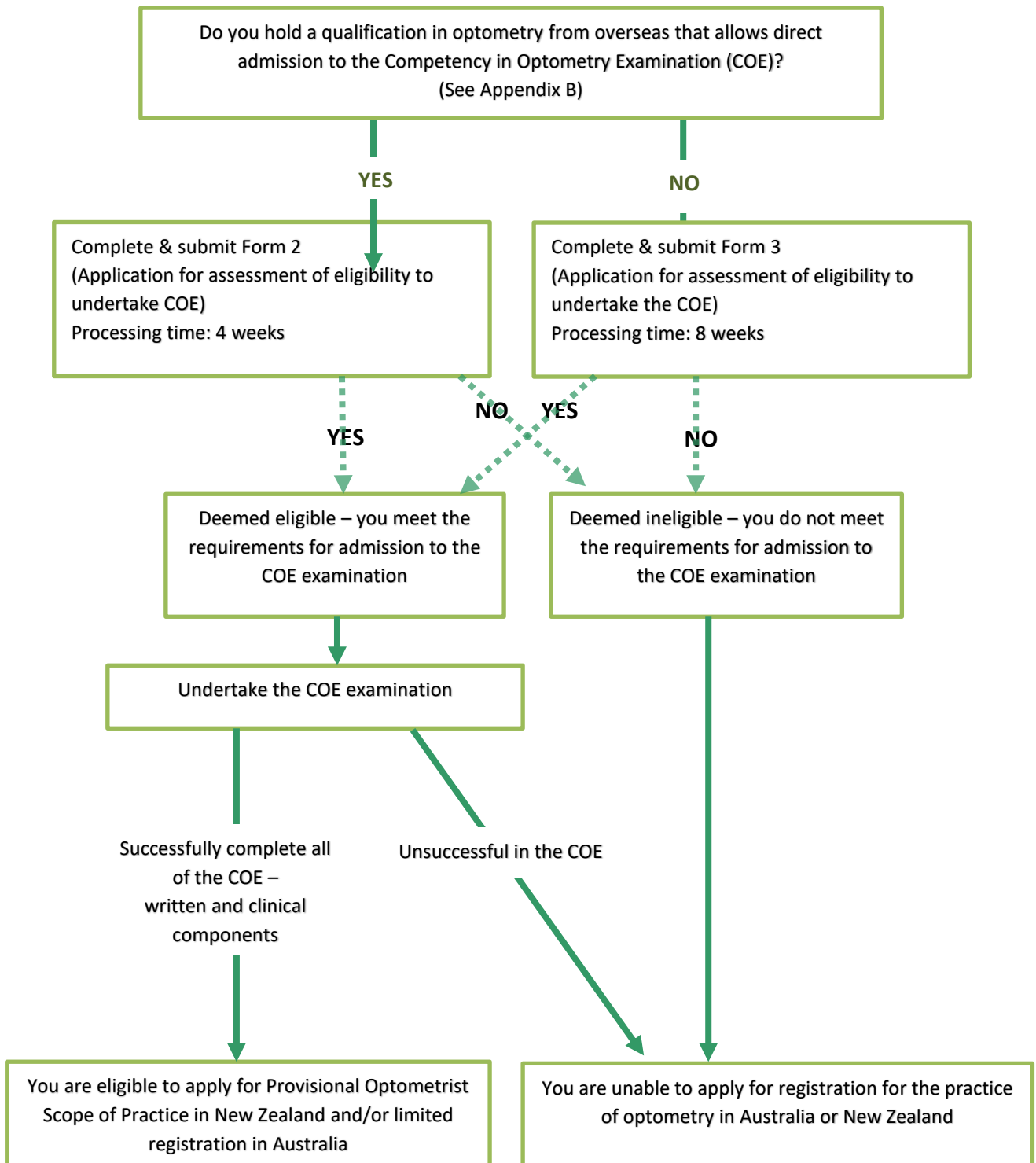
Persons holding a qualification in optometry obtained from an institution outside Australia and New Zealand are required to pass the **Competency in Optometry Examination (COE)** before applying for registration. The COE is conducted under the auspices of the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ).

Candidates who successfully complete the COE will be issued with a certificate. The certificate is accepted by the optometry registration boards in Australia and New Zealand as evidence that an entry-level standard of competence in optometry has been met, excluding ocular therapeutics, but does not automatically confer a right to be registered.

The COE certificate issued by OCANZ enables applicants to apply for limited registration in Australia, or for the Provisional Optometrist Scope of Practice in New Zealand, with the completion of additional training/examination in ocular therapeutics required by both the OptomBA and the ODOB to meet the requirements of general registration.

The Assessment of Competence in Ocular Therapeutics (ACOT) examination conducted by OCANZ is designed to test the competence of optometrists who hold a qualification in ocular therapeutics obtained overseas. Successful completion of the ACOT enables applicants to apply for general registration in Australia or New Zealand. Alternatively, candidates may undertake an ocular therapeutics course approved by the OptomBA or ODOB. Separate information regarding the ACOT can be found at <http://www.ocanz.org/assessment-of-competence-in-ocular-therapeutics>.

The final decision to register a person rests with the registration board in the jurisdiction in which the candidate wishes to practise optometry. A registration board may have additional prerequisites for registration such as English language proficiency requirements and evidence the candidate is of good character. Applicants should seek more information from the registration board with whom they propose to seek registration. See **Appendix A** for contact details of the registration boards in Australia and New Zealand.



2. Migration to Australia or New Zealand

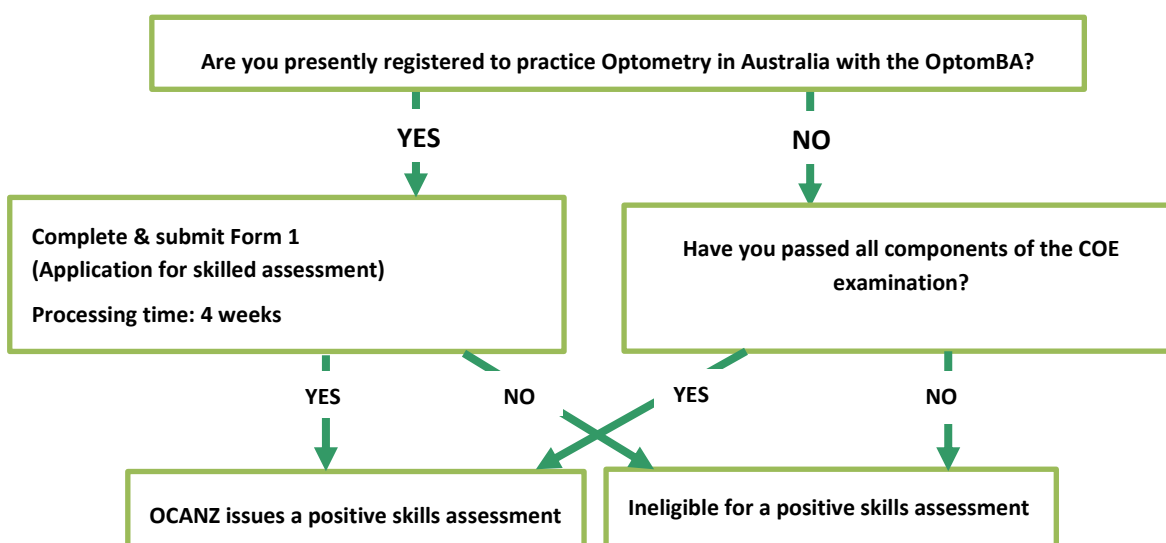
2.1 Skills Assessment for General Skilled Migration to Australia

Skilled migration visas are assessed by a points test. To be granted a visa in Australia under this category, applicants must score enough points to meet the “pass mark”. Points are allocated for skills, age, English language ability, occupation, and Australia work experience and Australian qualifications.

A person intending to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration program must obtain a skills assessment before applying to the Australian Department of Home Affairs. The applicant has to choose a Nominated Occupation from the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) and then contact the relevant assessing authority directly to have their skills assessed. The Australian government reviews this list annually.

Optometry is currently on the SOL. OCANZ is currently the assessing authority for optometry. Skills assessments can be issued by OCANZ to people registered with the Optometry Board of Australia, and/or who have successfully completed the COE.

Further information about skilled migration can be found at <http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/Trav/Work/Work>. Other migration pathways are detailed in the Home Affairs website <http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.



2.2 Period of validity of skills assessments

Skills assessments issued by OCANZ to optometrists already registered with the OptomBA are valid for a period of 3 years. Skills assessments issued after successful completion of the COE are valid for 3 years.

2.3 General Skills Category for Residence in New Zealand

Applicants for residence in New Zealand under the Skilled Migrant Category are assessed by a points system. To be granted residence in New Zealand under this category, applicants must score enough points to meet the “pass mark”.

Points are allocated for qualifications, work experience, offers of employment, age, and settlement factors. In addition, applicants must meet health, character and English language requirements.

Further information on New Zealand's immigration policy and procedures can be obtained from the nearest New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) office and from the NZIS website: www.immigration.govt.nz. OCANZ is not involved in NZ migration processes.

3. Assessment of Eligibility to sit the Competency in Optometry Examination

To be eligible to sit for the COE an applicant must provide evidence of successful completion of a course of at least 4 years full-time study, or a course of 3 years full-time study followed by one year supervised clinical practice. A subsequent pass in a professional examination is also necessary if the country of practice requires such an examination for registration purposes.

Applicants holding a qualification listed in **Appendix B** will be eligible to sit the examination however candidates may still have to undertake further study and preparation to meet the competency standards tested by the examinations.

Applicants not holding such a qualification will be required to have their eligibility to sit for the examination assessed by the OCANZ. The following factors are taken into account when assessing the training in optometry at an overseas institution:

- a) length of the course
- b) standard of the institution providing the course
- c) standard of the qualification
- d) course content (minimum 2000 hours of formal instruction of which no less than one third should be instruction in biomedical, visual and optical sciences and a strong foundation in the dysfunctions and diseases of the eye.)
- e) the extent of supervised clinical training in the course (at least one equivalent full time (EFT) academic year as clinical training, spent primarily in direct contact with a diversity of patients and presentations of ocular dysfunction and disease, the majority of time making independent management decisions that were reviewed under supervision by an experienced clinical instructor/s)
- f) whether the qualification held entitles registration to practice independently in the country of origin.

An assessment of the applicant's eligibility will be made based on the information requested in the Form 3 application form, available on the OCANZ website.

4. English Language Skills

A comprehensive knowledge of English is essential to practise optometry in Australia and New Zealand. The OptomBA and the ODOB have specific English Language Skills registration requirements. For information regarding registration standards for English language skills please refer to the OptomBA at www.optometryboard.gov.au and the ODOB at www.odob.health.nz.

OCANZ does not require a candidate to provide any evidence of English Language competency in order to sit the COE, but advises that the OptomBA requirements are indicative of the standard of English Language competency necessary to attempt the COE.

5. Competency Standards in Optometry

The 'Competency Standards' lists the minimum standards of knowledge, skills and attitudes that a new graduate entering employment as an optometrist needs to meet, in order to perform to an appropriate standard in the workplace. The COE tests the ability of the candidate in the specified areas addressed in the Competency Standards. These Competency Standards are further detailed in the OCANZ Examination Guide at <http://www.ocanz.org/examination/competency-in-optometry-examination/examination-guide/>.

6. The COE Examination Format

The Competency in Optometry Examination is in five parts, two written, two clinical, and one online Cultural Safety Training for Optometrists.

Written examination (2 parts):

- Clinical Science examination (one 3-hour multiple choice paper covering basic biomedical, vision and optical science and clinical science)
- Diagnosis and Management examination (one 3-hour short answer question paper examining the candidate's skill in patient diagnosis and management)

Cultural Safety Training for Optometrists online training (1 part)

- Completion of the OCANZ Cultural Safety Training for Optometrists online training program

Clinical examination (2 parts):

- Skills Station examination (clinical skills examination)
- Patient examination (four patient examinations in a clinical setting)

7. COE Examination Guide

The Competency in Optometry Examination Guide contains detailed information about the examination format and content and is available on the OCANZ website.

8. Preparation Courses

There are no preparation courses provided by OCANZ. Applicants may make private arrangements for tuition to assist them to prepare for the COE. Enquiries about tuition can be directed to the Optometry Schools.

Education providers with approved optometry programs are listed on the OptomBA website at www.optometryboard.gov.au/accreditation.

9. Application Procedures

Application forms for assessment of qualifications can be downloaded from the OCANZ website at <https://www.ocanz.org/examination/application-forms/>

Applications for both the written and clinical examinations which form part of the COE are not available on the website and are only available from OCANZ once eligibility has been determined.

10. Withdrawal from Examination

Candidates are advised to withdraw from the examination if an accident, illness or other unforeseen factor is likely to adversely affect examination performance.

For more information, refer to the Examination Fees Refund Policy on the OCANZ website.

11. Appeals

Candidates who believe they have cause to appeal in relation to conduct and/or outcome of an OCANZ examination must lodge an appeal with OCANZ within 28 days of the date of the release of the result of the examination.

Appeals against examination results will only be accepted when based on the following grounds.

1. an error in the examination process, including marking; or
2. evidence of unfairness by the person conducting the examination.

Difficulties in preparation or alleged difficulties in tuition are not grounds for appeal. The appeal process is not a means of circumventing the normal assessment procedures. Except in very limited circumstances (such as an error in summation of marks in a written examination or where the review finds that additional marks should have been awarded) a successful appeal will not lead to an examination result being altered. Where an appeal is upheld, the usual outcome is to allow the candidate an opportunity to re-sit that part of the examination that was in dispute without payment of further examination fees. However, this only occurs where the results of the original examination, taken as a whole, show that the candidate had competency close to meeting the standard required, and when a fault in the examination process has been established.

Information about appeals against other decisions including decisions concerning eligibility for admission to the examination is available from the OCANZ Executive Officer.

The first stage of the appeals process is an administrative review to ascertain whether any administrative or procedural error occurred. The fee for an administrative review is published on the OCANZ website and this fee will be refunded in the event that an error is identified and rectified to the candidate's satisfaction. If an administrative review does not find any error, a candidate may ask that the appeal be considered by an independent Appeal Committee. This appeal fee is also on the OCANZ website and is payable for each examination part for which an appeal is lodged. The examination parts are each of the written papers, the skills testing and the patient examinations.

Every effort will be made to deal with all appeals within 3 months from the lodgement of the appeal. The appeal fee will be refunded in the event that the appeal is upheld but is retained to offset the cost of undertaking the independent review if the appeal is unsuccessful.

12. COE Venues

The Written Examination is a remote, proctored examination, which can be sat online from your home country.

The Clinical Examination is conducted at the Australian College of Optometry in Melbourne.

13. COE Examination Dates

Information about examination dates is available on the OCANZ website at

<https://www.ocanz.org/examination/competency-in-optometry-examination/examination-dates-and-venues/> <http://www.ocanz.org/>

14. Further Information

Further information is available from:

Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand
PO Box 16179
Collins Street West, Victoria, 8007
Australia

Phone: +61 3 9670 3173
Email: exam.manager@ocanz.org.au
Website: www.ocanz.org

The Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand reserves the right to alter this document without notice.

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| Edited | Appendix B amended November 2025 and approved by the Examination Eligibility Committee (minor edits made by OCANZ staff February 2026) |
| Edited | Appendix B amended May 2026 and approved by the Examination Eligibility Committee |
| Approved by | Examination Committee/Examination Eligibility Committee/OCANZ Board |

Appendix A: OPTOMETRY REGISTRATION BOARDS

AUSTRALIA

Optometry Board of Australia
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne VIC 3001

Telephone: 1300 419 495

Website: www.optometryboard.gov.au

NEW ZEALAND

Optometrists & Dispensing Opticians Board
PO Box 9644
Wellington 6141
New Zealand

Telephone: +64 4 474 0705

Facsimile: +64 4 474 0709

Website: www.odob.health.nz

Appendix B: Overseas Optometry Qualifications allowing direct admission to the Competency in Optometry Examination

Applicants with a qualification listed below are eligible to sit for the Competency in Optometry Examination.

1. United Kingdom

A degree in optometry (ophthalmic optics) from one of the institutions approved by the General Optical Council of the United Kingdom obtained on or after 1 January 1965 and successful completion of the pre-registration year and professional examinations conducted by the College of Optometrists.

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|--|--------------|---|
| Anglia Ruskin University | 2000 - | BOptometry (BOptom) |
| University of Aston | 95- | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 65-94 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 65-94 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 95-2023 | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| | Current | Master of Optometry (MOptom) |
| University of Bradford | 82- | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry (Ophthalmic Optics) |
| | 82- | Bachelor of Science in Optometry (Ophthalmic Optics) |
| | 68-84 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 68-84 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | Current | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| Cardiff University | 95 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 95-2023 | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| | Current | Master of Optometry (MOptom) |
| University of Wales College of Cardiff | 93-94 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 93-94 | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |

| | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| | 89-92 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 89-92 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | Current | Course not offered |
| University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology | 66-88 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 66-88 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | Current | Course not offered. |
| The City University (London) | 86- | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 86- | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| | 65-85 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 65-85 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 85-2023 | Bachelor of Scienc with Honours in Optometry |
| | Current | Master of Optometry (MOptom with Hons) |
| Glasgow Caledonian University | 90- | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 90- | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| | 71-89 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 71-89 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | Current | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| Plymouth University | 2014-2023 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | Current | Master of Optometry with Honours (MOptom with Hons) |
| University of Central Lancashire | 2023- | Master of Optometry (MOptom) |
| University of Hertfordshire | 2015-Current | Master of Optometry (MOptom) |
| University of Huddersfield | 2023- | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| University of Ulster | 98 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---|
| | 98-2023 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | Current | Master of Optometry (MOptom) |
| University of Manchester | 93- | Bachelor of Science in Optometry Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |
| | 67-95 | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 67-95 | Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics |
| | 95-2026 | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| | 2028 - | Master of Science in Optometry |
| University of the West of England | 2018 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |

2. Republic of Ireland

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualifications |
|--------------------------------|--------|---|
| Dublin Institute of Technology | 1998 - | Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry |

3. United States of America and Canada

Qualification and training in the United States of America or in Canada at an institution accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education and graduation from such institution on or after 1 January 1966;

Canada

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|--|-------|-------------------------------|
| University of Montreal, Ecole d'Optometrie, Montreal | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of Waterloo, School of Optometry, Waterloo | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |

United States of America

| | | |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|
| Ferris State University Michigan, College of Optometry, Big Rapids, Michigan | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Indiana University, School of Optometry, Bloomington | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |

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|---|-------|-------------------------------|
| Illinois College of Optometry, Chicago | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Inter American University of Puerto Rico, School of Optometry | 85- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, School of Optometry | 2023- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry | 2013- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Midwestern University Chicago, College of Optometry | | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| New England College of Optometry, Boston | | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Northeastern State University, Oklahoma College of Optometry, Tahlequah | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Nova Southeastern University, College of Optometry, Fort Lauderdale | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| The Ohio State University, College of Optometry, Columbus | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Pacific University, College of Optometry, Forest Grove | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Pennsylvania College of Optometry, Elkins Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Southern California College of Optometry, Fullerton, Los Angeles | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Southern College of Optometry, Memphis | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| State University of New York, State College of Optometry, New York | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry, Birmingham | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of California, Berkeley, School of Optometry | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of Houston, College of Optometry, Houston | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of Missouri, St Louis, College of Optometry, | 66- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |

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|--|-------|-------------------------------|
| University of the Incarnate Word Rosenbeg School of Optometry | 2013- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| University of Pikeville, Kentucky College of Optometry | | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |
| Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry | 2013- | Degree of Doctor in Optometry |

4. South Africa

Qualification and training in South Africa from the following institutions and graduation from such institutions on or after 1 January, 1980.

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|---|---------------|--|
| Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg) | 67-04 | Degree of Bachelor of Optometry |
| University of Johannesburg | 2005- | Degree Bachelor of Optometry Baccalaureus Technologiae in Optometry |
| Technikon Witwatersrand | 1980- 2005 | Diploma in Optometry |
| University of Durban-Westville (now University of KwaZulu Natal) | 1980- 2004 | Degree of Bachelor of Optometry |
| University of KwaZulu Natal | 2004- | Degree Bachelor of Optometry |
| University of the Free State | 2005- | Degree of Bachelor of Optometry |

5. India

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|---|--------------|---|
| Alagappa University | 2010 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| Amity University | 2018 - | Bachelor of Clinical Optometry |
| Birla Institute of Technology & Science/ Bausch & Lomb School of Optometry | 2000 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| Bharati Vidyapeeth University | 2004 - | Bachelor of Clinical Optometry |
| Bharathiar University | 2016 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| Hari Joyt College of Optometry | 2018 - | Bachelor of Optometry |
| Indira Sandhi National Open University | 2011 - | Bachelor of science in Optometry and Ophthalmic Techniques |
| Kerala University of Health Sciences | 2010 - | Bachelor of Optometry |

| | | |
|--|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Manipal College of Health Science | 2007 - | Bachelor of Optometry |
| Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology | 2016 - | Bachelor of Optometry |
| Nagar School of Optometry, Gujarat University | 2017 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences | 2016 - | Bachelor of Science in Optometry |
| West Bengal University of Technology | 2007 - 2014 | Bachelor of Optometry |

6. Hong Kong

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|----------------------------------|--------|--|
| Hong Kong Polytechnic University | 1994 - | Bachelor of Science Honours in Optometry |

7. Philippines

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|---------------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Centro Escolar University | 1998 - | Doctor of Optometry |

8. Nigeria

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|-----------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Abia State University | 1997 - | Doctor of Optometry |
| IMO State University | 2009 - | Doctor of Optometry |
| University of Benin | 1993 - | Doctor of Optometry |

9. Pakistan

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|--------------------------------|--------|--|
| King Edward Medical University | 2010 - | Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Vision Science (Optometry) |
| University of Faisalabad | 2017 - | Bachelor of Optometry |

10. Nepal

| Name of Institution | Dates | Qualification |
|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Tribhuvan University | 2007 - | Bachelor of Optometry |