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## Assessing Optometrists with Overseas Qualifications – Explanatory Notes

This document provides general information about the assessment process for persons seeking registration as an optometrist in Australia or New Zealand. It is also directed at persons applying for skilled migration to Australia and requiring a skills assessment.

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### 1. Assessment for Registration in Australia and New Zealand

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Only persons registered with the Optometry Board of Australia or the Board in New Zealand are permitted to practise optometry in Australia or New Zealand.

Graduates of accredited Australian and New Zealand courses of study in optometry are qualified for registration in all the States and Territories of Australia and in New Zealand without further assessment. The accredited courses are listed in 'Appendix A'.

Persons holding a qualification in optometry obtained from an institution outside Australia and New Zealand are required to pass the Competency in Optometry Examination before making application for registration. The reason for this requirement is that the registration boards do not have the resources to accredit optometry courses other than those in Australia and New Zealand. The **Competency in Optometry Examination** is conducted under the auspices of the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ), a body established by the Australian and New Zealand optometrists registration boards.

OCANZ is governed by nine members: three representatives of the registration boards, three representatives of Optometrists Association Australia, one representative of the New Zealand Association of Optometrists and two representatives of the Heads of the Schools of Optometry in Australia and New Zealand.

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

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 evidence that the candidate has registration as an optometrist in another country and is of good character. Applicants should seek more information from the registration board with whom they propose to seek registration. Contact details for the registration boards in Australia and New Zealand are in 'Appendix B'.

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## **2. Migration to Australia or New Zealand**

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### **2.1 Skills Assessment for General Skilled Migration to Australia**

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 Immigration and Citizenship. The applicant has to choose a Nominated Occupation from the Skilled Occupation List and then contact the relevant assessing authority directly to have their skills assessed.

OCCANZ is the assessing authority for optometry and assessment for persons not currently registered with one of the Australian optometrists registration boards is by examination, known as the Competency in Optometry Examination. The basic requirements for General Skilled Migration are:

1. Age (applicants must be under the age of 45 years)
2. English language ability
3. Qualification (a post-secondary qualification in optometry is required)
4. Recent paid employment in optometry

**Requirements 1-4 above apply only to persons intending to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration program. They are not eligibility criteria for admission to the Competency in Optometry Examination.**

### **2.2 Period of validity of skills assessments**

Skills assessments issued by OCCANZ to optometrists already registered with an optometrists registration board in Australia are valid for a period of one year. Skills assessments issued after successful completion of the Competency in Optometry Examination are valid for 3 years.

Further information regarding General Skilled Migration can be obtained from the Department of Immigration offices in Australia or via the Department's website [www.immi.gov.au/asri](http://www.immi.gov.au/asri).

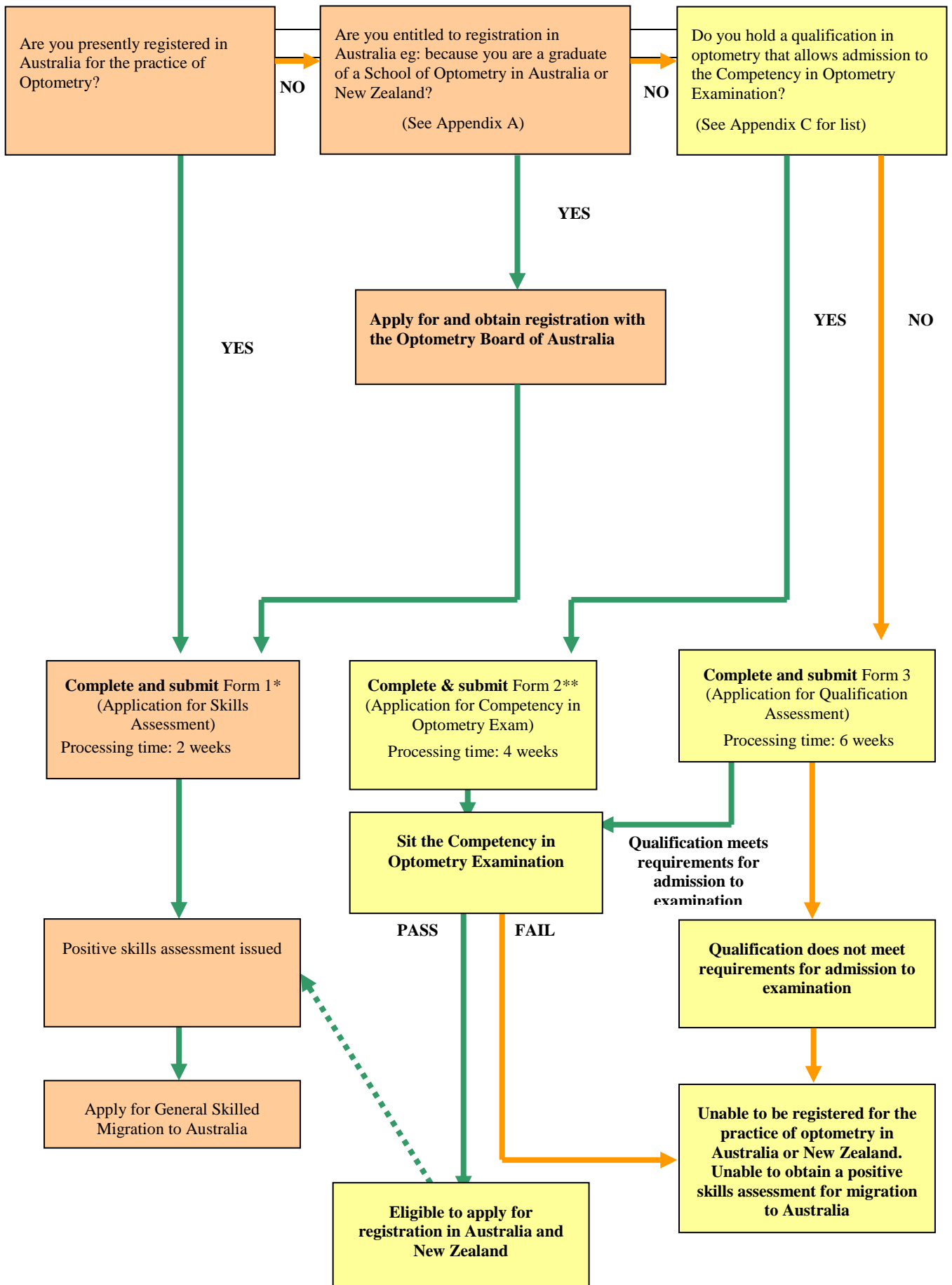
### **2.3 General Skills Category for Residence in New Zealand**

Principal Applicants for residence in New Zealand under the General Skills 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](http://www.immigration.govt.nz) or telephone +64 9 914 4100 (callers outside New Zealand), 0508 558 855 (callers in New Zealand but outside Auckland) or 09 914 4100 (callers from Auckland).

### 3. Overview of the Assessment Process



\*This step necessary only for persons applying for migration to Australia under the Skilled Migration Program

\*\*This step is to confirm eligibility to sit for the examination. It should be submitted at least 4 weeks before an examination closing date

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#### **4. Competency Standards in Optometry**

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The Competency in Optometry Examination tests the ability of the candidate in the areas addressed in the 'Competency Standards'. The 'Competency Standards' list 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.

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#### **5. Eligibility to sit the Competency in Optometry Examination**

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To be eligible to sit for Competency in Optometry Examination an applicant must provide evidence of successful completion of a course of 4 years full-time study or a course of 3 years full-time study followed by one year supervised clinical practice after which a professional examination is passed.

'Appendix C' lists the qualifications that OCANZ believes provide appropriate preparation, although not all the courses listed reach the standard of the Australian and New Zealand courses. Candidates may have to undertake further study and preparation to meet the competency standards tested by the examinations.

Applicants holding a qualification listed in 'Appendix C' will be eligible to sit the examination. 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) educational prerequisites for entry to the course
- b) length of the course
- c) standard of the institution providing the course
- d) standard of the qualification
- e) course content (minimum 2000 hours of formal instruction of which one third should be instruction in biomedical, visual and optical sciences)
- f) the extent of supervised clinical training (minimum 400 hours of clinical experience in the direct care and management of patients under supervision of experienced clinical instructors)
- g) the relevant qualifications of the teaching staff
- h) whether the qualification held entitles registration to practice independently in the country of origin

To assist OCANZ in reaching a decision on eligibility, the applicant will be required to supply:

- a) the course book or bulletin published by the institution providing the optometry course
- b) the official syllabus of each subject of the course including the hours of instruction, content and prescribed text books
- c) evidence of supervised clinical training

All documents must be those current at the time the applicant studied the course.

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## **6. Occupational English Test**

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A comprehensive knowledge of English is essential to practise optometry in Australia and New Zealand. The Optometry Board of Australia (OBA), which began on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010, has English Language Skills registration standards. All OCANZ applicants will now be required to fulfil these requirements before being able to sit the Competency in Optometry Examination.

All applicants, unless granted an exemption, are required to reach the following standard:

1. the IELTS examination (academic module) with a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components; or
2. completion and an overall pass in the OET with grades A or B only in each of the four components.

Results must have been obtained within the two years prior to applying to OCANZ. Results from either of these tests MUST be obtained in the one sitting. The applicant is responsible for the cost of these tests.

For further information and details, including the list of exemptions, please refer to

<http://www.optometryboard.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD10%2f159&dbid=AP&chksum=Q6QWxGLhDobOwxrHhLLtcw%3d%3d>.

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## **7. The Examination Format**

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Candidates must pass both parts of the written examination (Clinical Science examination and the Diagnosis and Management examination) before being able to proceed to the clinical examination. The two written papers are administered on consecutive days, twice each year. There is no limit on the number of times a candidate can sit the written examination papers. At their first attempt candidates must sit both the Clinical Science examination and the Diagnosis and Management examination at the one sitting. If one of these two papers is failed at this initial sitting, the candidate will have one (1) further opportunity to repeat only the failed paper at a later sitting. If at the second sitting they fail the paper again, they will need to resit both papers at their next and any subsequent attempts. If both of the papers are failed at any sitting, the candidate must repeat them both.

A pass in the Skills Station examination is required before a candidate may proceed to the Patient examinations.

The Patient examination must be passed within three (3) years of successfully completing the written examinations (Clinical Science and Diagnosis and Management examinations).

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## **8. Candidate Guide**

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A 'Candidate Guide' to the Competency in Optometry Examination contains detailed information about the examination format and content. The 'Candidate Guide' and other information including past examination papers is available on the OCANZ website: [www.ocanz.org](http://www.ocanz.org)

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## **9. Bridging courses**

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There are no bridging courses provided by OCANZ. Applicants may make private arrangements for tuition to assist them to prepare for the Competency in Optometry Examination. Enquiries about tuition can be directed to the Optometry Schools. Contact details for the Schools are in 'Appendix A'.

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## **10. Assistance for Australian residents**

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Australian citizens or permanent residents holding a qualification in optometry from an overseas institution may be able to obtain financial assistance from the Australian federal government. Details can be obtained from Australian Education International website: '[www.aei.gov.au](http://www.aei.gov.au)'

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## **11. Appeals**

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Candidates who believe they have cause to appeal in relation to conduct and/or outcome of the 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; 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 \$500 and 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. The appeal fee is \$1000 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.

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## **12. Application Procedures and Fees**

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Application forms are available from OCANZ and can also be downloaded from the Council's website: [www.ocanz.org](http://www.ocanz.org).

The fees (in Australian dollars) are as follows:

Skills Assessment (Form 1, non-refundable):	\$165 (Australian Resident), \$150 (non-resident)
Application Fee (Form 2, non refundable):	\$115
Qualification Assessment Fee (Form 3, non refundable):	\$340
Written Parts: (Australian or New Zealand venue):	
Both papers, initial sitting:	\$1600
Repeat sitting (one paper only):	\$850
Repeat sitting (both papers):	\$1600
Written Parts: (UK, South African or USA venue):	
Both papers, initial sitting:	\$2300
Repeat sitting (one paper only):	\$1200
Repeat sitting (both papers):	\$2300
Clinical Part 1: Skills Examination:	\$1500
Clinical Part 2: Patient Examination:	\$2550

Examination fees are to be paid prior to the closing date (set out at item 13) in Australian dollars by cheque/bank transfer or credit card and must be cleared before the applicant will be permitted to take the examination.

### **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.

In the case of withdrawal, examination fees may be refunded less administration and other costs incurred by OCANZ. Fees may be forfeited if the candidate gives less than 7 days written notice of inability to attend any part of the examination.

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## **13. Schedule of Examinations and Venues**

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### **13.1 Venues**

Candidates may sit for the Written Parts in Australia (Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and other capital cities if suitable arrangements can be made), New Zealand (Auckland), United Kingdom (London), Washington (USA) and South Africa (Johannesburg).

The Clinical Parts are conducted at the Australian College of Optometry in Melbourne

### **13.2 Examination dates**

#### **Written Parts**

First Session: Monday 28 March 2011 (3 hour MCQ paper), Tuesday 29 March 2011 (3 hour short answer paper)

Closing Date: Monday 21 February 2011

(Form 2 to be received by 24 January; Form 3 by 10 Jan 2011)

Second Session: Tuesday 30 August 2011 (3 hour MCQ paper), Wednesday 31 August 2011 (3 hour short answer paper)

Closing Date: Monday 25 July 2011

(Form 2 to be received by 27 June; Form 3 by 6 June 2011)

#### **Clinical Parts**

First Session: (candidates will be allocated to one of the following two groups) - Closing date Monday 23 May 2011

Skills Examination 1: Week of 20 June 2011

Patient Examination 1: Week of 27 June 2011

Skills Examination 2: Week of 4 July 2011

Patient Examination 2: Week of 11 July 2011

Second Session: (candidates will be allocated to one of the following two groups) - Closing date Monday 17 October 2010

Skills Examination 1: Week of 14 November 2011

Patient Examination 1: Week of 21 November 2011

Skills Examination 2: Week of 28 November 2011

Patient Examination 2: Week of 5 December 2011

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## **14. Further Information**

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Further information is available from:

The Executive Officer

Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

PO Box 1327

Collingwood VIC Australia 3066

Phone: +61 3 9417 3329

Facsimile: +61 3 8080 1681

Email: ['enquiries@ocanz.org'](mailto:enquiries@ocanz.org)

Website: ['www.ocanz.org'](http://www.ocanz.org).

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## **Appendix A**

Accredited Optometry Courses— graduates of these Schools/Departments obtain a qualification recognised by the Australian and New Zealand registration boards

Department of Optometry & Vision Sciences  
The University of Melbourne  
Cnr Keppel & Cardigan Streets  
CARLTON VIC 3053

Phone: +61 3 9349 7408  
Fax: +61 3 9349 7498  
E-mail: [admin@optometry.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:admin@optometry.unimelb.edu.au)  
Website: <http://www.optometry.unimelb.edu.au>

School of Optometry & Vision Science  
North Wing, Rupert Myers Building  
University of New South Wales  
SYDNEY NSW 2052

Phone: +61 2 9385 4639  
Fax: +61 2 9313 6243  
Email: [optometry@unsw.edu.au](mailto:optometry@unsw.edu.au)  
Website: <http://www.optom.unsw.edu.au>

School of Optometry  
Queensland University of Technology  
Victoria Park Road  
KELVIN GROVE QLD 4059

Phone: +61 7 3864 5739  
Fax: +61 7 3864 5665  
Email: [optometry.enquiries@qut.edu.au](mailto:optometry.enquiries@qut.edu.au)  
Website: <http://www.hlth.qut.edu.au/opt>

Department of Optometry and Vision Science  
University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland  
NEW ZEALAND

Tel: + 64 9 373 7599  
Fax: + 64 9 373 7058  
Website: [www.optometry.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.optometry.auckland.ac.nz)

## Appendix B

### Boards of Optometric Registration

#### AUSTRALIA

Optometry Board of Australia  
PO Box 16085  
Collins Street West  
Melbourne Vic 8007

Telephone: 1300 088 590  
Email: [enquiries@optometryboard.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@optometryboard.gov.au)  
Website: <http://www.optometryboard.gov.au>

#### NEW ZEALAND

Optometrists & Dispensing Opticians Board  
Level 3 Freemason House  
195-201 Willis Street  
Wellington  
New Zealand  
**Postal Address:**  
PO Box 10-140  
Wellington  
New Zealand

Telephone: +64 4 474 0705  
Facsimile: +64 4 474 0709  
E-mail: [registrar@odob.health.nz](mailto:registrar@odob.health.nz)  
Website: <http://www.odob.health.nz/home>

## Appendix C: Overseas Optometry Qualifications allowing admission to the Competency in Optometry Examination

Approved qualifications from the UK, USA, Canada and South Africa are listed below. 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
University of Aston	95-	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry
	95-	Bachelor of Science in Optometry
	65-94	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics
	65-94	Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics
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
Cardiff University	95	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry
	95-	Bachelor of Science in Optometry
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
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	66-88	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics



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
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
University of Ulster	98	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry
	98	Bachelor of Science in Optometry
Institute of Science and Technology University of Manchester		Bachelor of Science in Optometry
	93-	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Optometry
	93	Bachelor of Science in Optometry
	67-95	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Ophthalmic Optics
Anglia Ruskin University	67-95	Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Optics
	2000-	Bachelor of Optometry (Honours)

## 2. 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;

Name of Institution	Dates	Qualification
<b>Canada</b>		
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
<b>United States of America</b>		
Ferris State University Michigan, College of Optometry, Big Rapids, Michigan	66-	Degree of Doctor in Optometry
Indiana University,	66-	Degree of Doctor in Optometry

School of Optometry, Bloomington		
Inter American University of Puerto Rico, School of Optometry, San Juan		
Illinois College of Optometry, Chicago	66-	Degree of Doctor in Optometry
New England College of Optometry, Boston	66-	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

### 3. 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)	1980-	Degree of Bachelor of Optometry
Technikon Witwatersrand	1980-	Diploma in Optometry
University of Durban-Westville (now University of KwaZulu Natal)	1980-	Degree of Bachelor of Optometry
University of Limpopo and University of Free State		* See link to Education and Training under Optometry & Dispensing Opticians Board on HSPCA website