

## Action Plan: Manitoba Association of Optometrists

In response to the Fairness Commissioner's recommendation in the 2016-17 Registration Review, MAO proposed the following action:

Progress Opportunities	Action Plan	Anticipated Completion Date	Status as of February 2018	Update
<p>1. Monitoring and reviewing the FORAC credential assessment and Touchstone Institutes IGO Evaluating Exam for its impact on IEOs is needed to ensure the licensure process is timely, cost effective and accessible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FORAC is made up of provincial optometry regulators, including MAO. MAO's Registrar is on the FORAC Board and attends meetings at FORAC and OEBC.</li> <li>The credentialing process has recently undergone many changes and improvements. MAO believes that the new process is fair, timely and effective. The process is costly, however it is difficult to balance improvements in timeliness and testing methods with cost increases. The recent changes have added some complexity, but allow well-qualified applicants to move through the process faster.</li> </ul>	<p>Complete/ ongoing</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing</p>	<p>The Manitoba Association of Optometrists (MAO) continues to monitor the process and participates on both the FORAC Board and the Optometry Examining Board of Canada or OEBC (formerly the Canadian Examiners in Optometry or CEO).</p> <p>MAO continues to support FORAC's credential assessment and Touchstone Institute's IGO Evaluating exam as a fair, timely and effective assessment approach.</p>
<p>2. Where possible, improving the time, cost and accessibility of the licensure process for IEOs trained outside the U.S. will be critical for the success of this group of applicants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FORAC's assessment process is quick, MAO's application and registration process is quick. Delays may occur in the IGOEE, IOBP and/or OEBC exam portions of the credentialing process, or due to residency issues.</li> <li>The new process is an improvement in that IEOs who <i>do</i> have equivalent training can now bypass short bridging. Those who won't get through the</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>One of the benefits of the new assessment process is that applicants that do well on the IGO Evaluating Exam can proceed to the national exam without undertaking bridge training. Previously some measure of bridge training was mandatory. MAO recently licensed an internationally educated optometrist who successfully undertook the exam and was able to forego the time and expense involved in bridge training.</p>

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	<p>FORAC/IGOEE process to go straight to the national exam are those that <i>don't</i> have equivalent training. We believe that the only way to “improve licensure opportunities” would be to lower standards. Given our responsibility to protect the public, we believe the process is fair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OMFC’s definition of success (less than one year for all IEOs to be registered) is not realistic for a profession with the level of expertise of optometry. Particularly since optometry is defined very differently in different countries: in some countries, optometrists may now be performing laser surgery, while in others optometrists may be limited to prescribing eyewear. In Manitoba, optometrists can prescribe therapeutic pharmaceuticals and treat eye disease. MAO is responsible to ensure practicing optometrists have the skills and knowledge required by their scope of practice in Manitoba.</li> <li>• It is costly to administer advanced education programs and OSCE exams. This is reflected in the cost to North American optometry students and IEOs.</li> <li>• As a small province and a small profession, accessibility can be a concern for all Manitobans. In terms of</li> </ul>			

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	<p>opportunities to enter programs or write exams, available seats are directly related to the volume of applicants – a small profession can only support so many exam sittings and educational programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a small province we are limited in our ability to provide local education, bridge training, and testing. No provincial optometry regulator provides this (with the possible exception of Quebec). As for all Manitoba residents, it's necessary to go through the national channels for optometry in Canada.</li> <li>There is not much more that MAO can do to reduce time, accessibility or costs. At this time however, MAO will continue to participate in FORAC and OEBC (see #1), and MAO will work with FORAC to monitor the new process (see#4) and its impact on IEOs, particularly as the new process continues to unfold.</li> </ul>			
<p>3. Improving MAO's registration information concerning pre-migration steps, documentation requirements, initial application fee and documentation, access to records and Touchstone Institutes' IGO Evaluating Exam schedule and location would be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add information on pre-migration steps to our website (English proficiency, documents to get ready, compare University of Waterloo program courses for education equivalency, contact FORAC to initiate process).</li> <li>Add statement to our website: "You will receive results from all assessments. If</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>MAO revised its registration information for internationally educated applicants provided online. Information is clear, user-friendly and provided by step. This includes information and links about pre-migration steps, needed documents, immigration status requirements, English language proficiency requirements, comparative educational equivalency information and FORAC contact information.</p>

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helpful.	<p>you don't, you should ask the institution. If you have not received results, you may contact MAO for guidance or contact information."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask Touchstone to post IGOEE dates and location information on their website.</li> </ul>			<p>A statement about assessment result information is now provided. Touchstone Institute now posts IGO Exam dates on its website and identifies the possibility of additional dates, in the circumstance of sufficient demand.</p>
4. Work with FORAC to collect data for Manitoba IEOs engaging the FORAC credential assessment and IGO Evaluating Exam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask FORAC if we can access information on Manitoba applicants (if there is no privacy concern).</li> <li>• Ask FORAC if there are records of pass rates by country.</li> <li>• If MAO can access information, work on collecting data over time to report on concerns such as: how applicants perform depending on country of education; number of Manitoba applicants compared to immigrating optometrists as reported by Manitoba Immigration; success rate for Manitoba applicants.</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Will take some time before there is any significant data (new process).</p>	Ongoing	<p>MAO contacted FORAC to discuss access to data. FORAC provided information about the number of applicants residing in Manitoba and assessment outcomes.</p> <p>MAO will continue working with FORAC to see what may be possible regarding data collection.</p> <p>With a new assessment process in a relatively small profession, data collection in some areas, like exam pass rates by country of education, may not be particularly significant for several years.</p>

#### MAO Comments

- Because optometry is defined differently in different countries, perceived success-rates of internationally educated applicants may be misleading.
- Through our membership in FORAC and OEBC, MAO is involved in the development of the national process for IEOs and for North American trained optometrists.
- High tuition and testing costs as well as out-of-province travel are the reality for all Manitoba optometrists entering practice. Manitoba is a small province and optometry a small profession. All

Manitoba optometrists must travel outside of Manitoba for optometric training and exams. All must pay the high cost for out-of-province or U.S. schooling and living expenses. OMFC has commended optometry's use of an OSCE as a fair assessment method; however, OSCEs are an expensive type of exam to design and administer.

- OMFC has stated that “It makes sense for MAO to explore in-province, professional orientation and gap training for IEOs.” All Canadian optometry regulators rely on the national process for IEOs, as well as for Canadian-trained optometrists. MAO does not have the resources to develop or provide an in-province accreditation/gap training process for IEOs. MAO is not able to construct our own assessment processes, bridging, or examination protocols; the cost involved would be unreasonable and the resulting cost to applicants would be prohibitively expensive, far more expensive than the current national process.
- OMFC has suggested that we consider “waiving the national OEBC Written Exam and OSCE” for IEOs who have completed the Bridging Program. The OEBC Written Exam and OSCE is a national requirement for all optometrists.
- OMFC has suggested that MAO provide “opportunities for professional orientation and the ability to demonstrate competence and meet gaps under supervision [in order to] support a much timelier, more accessible licensure process for IEOs in Manitoba.” MAO is not able to offer supervised practice opportunities as a method of credential assessment. Optometry is a healthcare profession requiring significant expertise and education. Evaluation through written exams, OSCEs and bridging programs is the standard to which health care professions are held. The potential risk to patients is too high for a minimalist qualification/orientation process.
- It is frequently noted by OMFC that the process for IEOs involves out-of-province travel and a high cost national exam. This is exactly the same for all Manitoba residents. Optometry is a small profession and there are no educational opportunities for optometry in Manitoba. While there is only one English language program for IEOs in Canada, there is also only one English language optometry degree program in Canada. All Manitobans that wish to become optometrists must take their Doctor of Optometry degree out-of-province. All Manitoba optometrists also must complete the national optometry exam in Ontario (or Quebec, in French) regardless of whether they completed their education in Ontario, Illinois, Arizona, or any other ACOE optometry school.