



Council on Optometric Practitioner Education

Information for Administrator Qualification and Instructions for COPE Event Submission

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ARBO

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*A service of the
Association of Regulatory
Boards of Optometry (ARBO)*



Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry, Inc.

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Dear Continuing Education Administrator:

One-stop CE approval for a large number of states, with no headaches! That's one reason why the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO) developed the Council on Optometric Practitioner Education[®] (COPE[®]). While COPE's main purpose is to assist state licensing boards of optometry in the review and approval process for optometric continuing education (CE) necessary for license renewal, this centralized approval process benefits CE Administrators as well.

COPE reduces the amount of work and effort you expend in obtaining approval for your programs from individual state boards. Standardized forms and processes shared by ARBO Member Boards eliminate needless redundancy for everyone. Using the COPE symbol for approved courses in your promotional materials will tell practitioners seeking CE that your courses are already accepted for license renewal in all COPE states. As a COPE administrator, you can also search our entire database of CE courses to help you when planning your next CE program. This information is available on our website at www.arbo.org.

Obtaining COPE approval for your program is easy. All you need to do is go to the ARBO website (www.arbo.org), click on COPE and then click on Administrators Submit Events. Courses appearing on your program that have already been submitted to COPE (many usually are) are designated as "COPE Qualified" and can be promoted as such in your marketing efforts. These courses are now suitable for CE credit and are accepted by state optometry licensing boards participating in COPE. If there are courses you want to offer in your program that are not yet COPE qualified, please contact the course instructors and ask them to submit their courses for COPE qualification.

All the information you need to apply can be found by going to www.arbo.org and clicking on COPE. Please read this entire handbook before applying for COPE approval as this will expedite the qualification process. We recommend that you submit your event as early as possible when planning your program.

Should you need further information about COPE, or if you need help entering your event, please call the ARBO office at (704) 970-2710, or email to arbo@arbo.org. If you need more information on submitting courses for COPE qualification, contact ARBO or see the *Criteria for COPE Qualification of Continuing Education* handbook.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JF Combs" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jerald F. Combs, O.D., Chair
Council on Optometric Practitioner Education





WHAT IS COPE?

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Optometric continuing education (CE) is the primary method used by optometric regulatory boards to promote the continuing competence of licensed optometrists. There are a myriad of formats by which each optometry licensing board approves CE courses, disseminates course information, records course attendance, and retrieves practitioner data on course completion. One licensing board duplicates much of the administrative work done by another licensing board, and many boards approve the same CE courses every year.

The **Council on Optometric Practitioner Education® (COPE®)**, a national clearinghouse for all CE courses of a statewide, regional or national scope, was created to remove these duplicative efforts by state licensing boards, instructors, and program administrators.

By agreeing to abide by certain basic standards, your organization can be designated a **COPE Qualified Administrator**. In addition to reducing the amount of time and effort you spend currently securing individual state optometry licensing board approval for your program(s), this designation will enhance the effectiveness of your marketing efforts to practitioners who are seeking COPE approved CE.

COPE is a member benefit of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO), which is the association that currently represents 50 US optometry boards, 4 US territories/jurisdictions, and 3 Canadian boards. COPE's mission is to:

- (1) Coordinate the review and approval of continuing optometric education courses on behalf of state licensing boards on a national basis.
- (2) Reduce duplication of effort by state optometry licensing boards.
- (3) Create a uniform method of recording continuing education courses on a national basis.
- (4) Be the clearinghouse for information about continuing education programs and courses utilized by licensed optometrists to fulfill their continuing education requirements for license renewal.
- (5) Encourage program sponsors to offer high-quality CE in appropriate settings with adequate administrative structure.

To create this national clearinghouse, participating state licensing boards have agreed upon standards for administration of continuing education courses; a standard form for submission for course approval, and a standard form for reporting continuing education courses.

COPE Approved CE Credit

It is important to remember that when you advertise a COPE-Approved course, you are informing state optometry licensing boards that you are a *Qualified Administrator* of CE events, presenting *Qualified Courses*.

Only *Qualified Administrators* may advertise a course as COPE Approved.

Remember:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{COPE Qualified Administrator} \\
 + \\
 \text{COPE Qualified Course(s)} \\
 = \\
 \text{COPE Approved CE}
 \end{array}$$

HOW TO OBTAIN COPE APPROVAL FOR YOUR EVENT

IMPORTANT: All courses which will be held at your event must be COPE qualified prior to submitting the event. It takes approximately 4-6 weeks for a course to go through the COPE qualification process. For more information on submitting individual courses for COPE qualification, contact ARBO for a copy of the Criteria for COPE Qualification of Continuing Education handbook or go to www.arbo.org and click on COPE.

Obtaining COPE approval for your event is easy. Your first step is to submit the event through the ARBO website (www.arbo.org). You will need to submit each event (e.g. meeting, conference, online) your organization administers only once regardless of how many courses will be held at the event. For example, if your organization administers a single, three-day annual meeting that presents CE courses for attendees and is called “XXX Annual Meeting 2008”, you are required to submit only one COPE Event for the entire meeting (not one for each course presented in the meeting). You must submit your COPE Event to the ARBO website at least one week prior to your scheduled event.

Once ARBO has received your COPE Event submission, you will be sent an email confirming your submission. We will then verify your course(s) against our database of COPE Qualified Courses and register those that are successfully matched. The courses that we register are now considered “COPE-Approved Courses.” You will receive an email from ARBO notifying you when your event has been approved.

Your event and list of courses are then posted on the ARBO website (www.arbo.org) for access by all state optometry licensing boards. Licensing boards verify CE credit certificates that you distribute to meeting attendees against the information we post on the ARBO website. Your organization affirms its agreement to abide by COPE’s Criteria for Administrator Qualification (page 6) each time you submit a COPE Event, thereby placing your designation as a COPE Qualified Administrator on a rolling basis, dependent on when you actually submit an event to ARBO.

An electronic copy of the COPE logo is available, without charge, to COPE Qualified Administrators to use in promotional materials to help identify the status of CE approval to your meeting attendees. The logo can be downloaded from the ARBO website.

Remember that each COPE Qualified Course has a unique COPE Course Number. Your COPE Approved Event will also be assigned a COPE Event number. It is vital that you include these COPE numbers in all correspondence to ARBO, state optometry licensing boards, and on all CE attendance certificates.

Check list:

- When submitting your COPE Event on the ARBO website, always check that the contact information we have for you is accurate. We must have your correct email address in order to respond to you about your event.
- For your event to be approved, you will need to attach:
 - COPE Qualified Course ID numbers for all the courses being held at your event.
 - A copy of your promotional literature or registration materials for the meeting.
 - A copy of the attendance certificate which will be distributed to the meeting attendees.
- Remit the necessary application processing fee identified on the website that corresponds to the number of COPE Qualified Courses presented at your meeting. Events will not be approved until payment is received.
- Submit your Event to ARBO at least one week in advance of the meeting date.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING AN EVENT

IMPORTANT: Courses are not “COPE Approved” until an EVENT has been submitted, along with the required documentation, to ARBO by a qualified CE Administrator.

1. Go to the ARBO website (www.arbo.org) and click on COPE.
2. Click on Administrators-Submit Events (in the gray box) and follow the step-by-step instructions.
 - Choose your name from the drop-down list or enter your first name, last name or organization and click on SEARCH to search for yourself in our database. If you can't find your name or your organization, call the ARBO office to be added to the administrator database.
 - Verify that your contact information is correct. In order to approve your event, we must have an accurate email address for you. We will only contact you regarding your event by email. If your contact information is not correct please call the ARBO office to have it updated.
 - Enter the COPE numbers for the courses that will be held at your event (e.g. meeting, conference, online, etc.). Enter one course at a time and then click on Add this Course. After each course is added, verify that you have added the correct course. If you mistakenly typed in the wrong course number, click your browser's "BACK" button to re-enter the correct course number. When you have added all the courses that will be held at your event, click on Proceed to Step 4.
 - Attach a copy of your promotional literature or registration materials for the event. Click on Browse to locate the file on your computer. Click on the file to be uploaded and then click on Open. Next, click on Upload this File. **Note:** Please keep file sizes to a minimum and in a format that is easily readable (Microsoft Office document, JPG file, etc.)
 - Attach a copy of the certificate which will be given to the attendees verifying attendance at the meeting or course. Click on Browse to locate the file on your computer. Click on the file to be uploaded and then click on Open. Next, click on Upload this File. **Note:** Please keep file sizes to a minimum and in a format that is easily readable (Microsoft Office document, JPG file, etc.) Each certificate must include the COPE Course # and the COPE Event #.
3. Click on Continue to Event Registration and follow the step-by-step instructions.
 - Review the Submitter and Administrator information. If you are the submitter, please make sure we have your correct email address. Otherwise, information about the event will only be sent to the administrator.
 - Enter the Event Information: Title, Date, Format Publication (if applicable), Subject (choose the category that describes the majority of the courses offered), Meeting location, Total hours, Website and Description.
 - Review the courses listed to make sure all the correct courses are attached.
 - Check that you have attached all the pertinent documents.
 - Fill out the Disclosure of Financial/Proprietary Interests section, if necessary.
 - Click on Continue. If there are any errors listed on the next page, use the back button on your browser to go back and add the necessary information. By submitting your event, you are certifying that the organization you represent agrees to comply with the COPE Criteria for Administrator Qualification (page 6).
 - You will be given an Event Number. Please always use this number when referencing your event.
4. To pay for your event, enter your credit card information. After payment and processing are complete, you will be sent an email confirming submission of your event. You will be sent a second email notifying you when your event is approved.

FEES

The fee for submitting an event varies depending on the number of courses that are held at the event. For an event that includes 1-5 COPE-approved courses, the fee is \$30.00; for 6-10 COPE-approved courses, the fee is \$50.00; for 11 or more COPE-approved courses, the fee is \$50.00 + \$4.00 for each course over 10.

CRITERIA FOR ADMINISTRATOR QUALIFICATION

As a COPE Qualified Administrator, you agree to comply with the following reasonable standards. Most CE providers already meet the majority, if not all, of these criteria. They represent the core elements of good CE administration that are required by most state optometry licensing boards. Each time you submit an event, you agree to abide by these standards. If you have any questions concerning these criteria, please contact ARBO.

1. Courses:

All courses must be open to all optometrists.

2. Registration:

- Fees must be published clearly in promotional material.
- Any difference in member and non-member fees must be reasonable.
- On your registration materials, indicate which courses are COPE Approved and which are not.
- Ask each registrant to provide their *OE TRACKER* number and to bring their *OE TRACKER* card with them to the meeting.

3. Instructional hours:

- The minimum credit for any COPE Approved Course is one hour.
- Additional credits must be in half-hour increments.
- One hour of continuing education credit equals 50 minutes of instructional time.

4. Facilities:

- The physical environment used must be conducive to learning.
- The instructional area must be appropriate and adequate to the content and method of delivery of the course and must be appropriate and adequate to the content and method of delivery of the course and must be appropriately equipped with any audio-visual or clinical equipment needed to teach the course.
- The instructional area must accommodate the size of the audience comfortably.
- The venue must comply with ADA standards.

5. Monitoring Attendance:

- Monitoring must be an active policing process, conducted with integrity and impartiality.
- Administrators must monitor attendance at all courses and ensure that CE credit is provided only to those individuals actually present during at least 50 minutes of each hour.
- At a minimum, this includes monitoring attendance throughout the day for all programs exceeding ½ day by recording attendance at the beginning of a course and verifying completion at the conclusion of the course.
- This is typically accomplished by distributing CE credit forms only at the very beginning of the course, and validating the forms held by attendees with an official seal or mark only at the very conclusion of the course.

- No partial credit is permitted under any circumstances.
- To help you monitor attendance of the courses, bar-code scanners are available from ARBO at no charge. For more information, or to request scanners for your event, email arbo@arbo.org.

6. Documenting Attendance:

- Each participant must receive documentation of attendance, which will allow each course attended to be identified.
- Documentation must be made available to participants in a timely fashion.
- All certificates and/or other means of documenting CE credit must allow for the following information:
 - Name and address of the participant.
 - State(s) of licensure and license number.
 - COPE Event number and each COPE Course number [MANDATORY!]**
 - Location and date(s) of the course(s).
 - Name of the instructor(s).
 - Name of the administrator.
 - Number of hours of CE credit awarded.
 - Signature of administrator or a duly authorized representative, or symbol verifying attendance.
- Attendance records must be retained for 5 years.
- ARBO must be notified in writing of any late changes/substitutions in a program.

7. Course Evaluations:

- Evaluations of course effectiveness must be carried out.
- A summary of the evaluation of each course must be kept on file for one year.
- Each instructor must receive a copy of the evaluation summary for his/her course.
- The evaluations must be used in planning future programs.

8. Disclosure of financial/proprietary interests:

- Instructors and administrators must disclose any financial interest or other relationship with a manufacturer, vendor, or distributor of any commercial products or services related to the practice of optometry.
- Courses presented on behalf of a commercial/proprietary entity which specifically promotes one or more products of that company, will not be approved.
- Commercial/proprietary entities must have no influence over course development or presentation.

Continued on page 7.

CRITERIA FOR ADMINISTRATOR QUALIFICATION...*continued*

9. Notification of course approval:

Administrators may use only the following specific terms in promotional marketing materials:

- If a program has been filed with COPE, and all submitted courses are qualified: *COPE Approval granted for some or all parts of this program.*
- If a program has been submitted for review to COPE, but review is not yet complete, or Administrator intends to submit the program for review: *COPE Approval Pending.*
- No other descriptions or terms are permitted as they relate to the COPE logo or the acronym "COPE". Please note that both the logo and the acronym, "COPE", are registered service marks and are protected under the Trademark Act from improper or illegal use.

10. Acceptance of COPE On-Site Reviewers:

Administrators agree to accept COPE-designated on-site reviewers at COPE approved programs and understand that such reviewers will appear randomly, without advance notice. The reviewer will present an official letter from COPE verifying his/her status as a COPE On-Site Reviewer, and must be permitted to attend without being required to pay a registration fee. However, COPE reviewers who seek CE credit are expected to register and pay for courses in the same manner as any other participant.

SUBMITTING CE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION TO *OE TRACKER*

Many state licensing boards require their optometrists to use the *OE TRACKER* database for electronically tracking of their CE attendance. Course and event attendance information can be submitted to ARBO by CE Administrators for uploading into the *OE TRACKER* database. You can submit your CE attendance information in one of the following ways:

- **Excel Spreadsheet (Preferred):** Download a pre-formatted Excel spreadsheet from the ARBO website by clicking on **Administrator Login** and entering your username and password. Click on **Upload CE Attendance Data** and then click on the form for a COPE-Approved Event. Email the completed spreadsheet to arbo@arbo.org. If you do not have a username and password, contact the ARBO office to be added as an administrator.
- **ARBO Barcode Scanners:** Barcode scanners are available from ARBO at no charge. We will be happy to provide you with instructions and training on using the scanners. Contact ARBO 3-4 weeks in advance of your event to reserve the scanners. After your event, simply return the scanners to the ARBO office and we will upload your attendance data into *OE TRACKER*.
- **Sign-In Sheet:** You may record attendance on a sign-in sheet and fax it to the ARBO office to be manually entered. As of March 1, 2009, there will be a processing charge per course for the ARBO staff to manually enter CE attendance data from sign-in sheets. For 20 or fewer attendees, the charge is \$50; for 21-50 attendees, the charge is \$75; for 51-100 attendees, the charge is \$105 with an additional \$30 charge for every 50 attendees. The attendance information will only be entered into *OE TRACKER*, if it includes the Event Number, COPE Course Number, Course Date, Attendees' *OE TRACKER* Numbers, Name and Signature.

Please Remember:

In order to accurately upload the CE attendance information into the *OE TRACKER* database, we must have the attendees' *OE TRACKER* numbers. To save time, please ask your attendees to supply their *OE TRACKER* Number when they register for your event. If they do not know their *OE TRACKER* number, they can easily find it by going to www.arbo.org and clicking on **OE Tracker Number Lookup**.

GLOSSARY OF COPE TERMS

ADMINISTRATOR: The organization, group, or entity assuming overall responsibility for program planning, promotion, on-site administration, and financial management. The Administrator handles all attendee registration, prepares any program handouts, and is responsible for all on-site logistical details for a meeting.

APPROVAL: The status, *COPE Approved Course*, applies only when a *COPE Qualified Administrator* presents a *COPE Qualified Course*. The COPE logo, which is issued by COPE to a Qualified Administrator, can be used only to identify a *COPE Approved Course*. Approval is assigned separately for each meeting/conference offered by an Administrator when the event with the list of selected courses is submitted to COPE for approval.

ARBO: Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit association of regulatory boards of optometry. ARBO's mission is to represent and assist member licensing agencies in regulating the practice of optometry for the public welfare. ARBO created COPE in 1995 as a service to its member boards; COPE is administered from ARBO's administrative offices in Charlotte, NC.

COPE: The Council on Optometric Practitioner Education, a service of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO).

COURSE: A structured, educational event specifically designed to impart new knowledge, shared experiences or factual evidence, which is used maintain the level of optometric competence consistent with the statutory requirements of a given state law defining optometry.

COURSE CATEGORY: Each *COPE Qualified Course* is categorized into one of 15 generalized content areas developed by COPE to meet the CE requirements for practitioner re-licensure of participating boards of optometry. The instructor, according to the major emphasis of the course content, categorizes each course; courses may be reallocated to a different content area by COPE during the review process, or at any point subsequent to its acceptance. All COPE Approved courses appearing in promotional materials or programs must carry the COPE logo, course ID#, and course category. The category must also appear on the documentation provided to course attendees, along with the COPE ID#, for boards of optometry to use when verifying CE credit for license renewal.

COURSE DEMOGRAPHICS: Key course information critical to the categorization, processing and review of a course submitted to COPE. Much of this information is entered into a database and is made available to boards of optometry (attendance and course authentication), program administrators (future program planning), and general practitioners (future CE program attendance planning).

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a brief statement of what the instructor(s) intends to present, summarizing the course in 35 words or less, which is suitable for publishing.

COURSE FORMAT: The method used to physically teach a course (i.e., Live, Video, Audio, DVD/CD-ROM, Satellite, Written or Internet/Online).

COURSE PRESENTATION: The method used to present the information in a course, (i.e., Lecture, Interactive/Workshop, Panel, Symposia/Scientific Lectures, Grand Rounds, Correspondence, or Internet/Online). More than one presentation method can be used in a course.

COURSE OUTLINE: A Course Outline is a basic guide to the key learning elements contained in a course. Usually laid out in bullet format, a Course Outline should be in sufficient detail so as to permit either the participant or an observer the ability to clearly follow along throughout the presentation. An outline can be considered sufficiently detailed if an observer is able to enter the presentation and after 5 or 10 minutes be able to locate where in the outline the presenter is. As a rough guide, a 1-½ to 2 page outline is typical for a one-hour course.

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV): A CV is a detailed chronological history of a person's educational and teaching experience, and professional accomplishments, which qualifies the instructor to teach the course (NOT a biographical sketch).

GLOSSARY OF COPE TERMS...continued

COURSE NUMBER: Each course is given a unique identification number when it becomes COPE Qualified. If the course is discontinued after qualification for any reason, the number is not used for another course. The number consists of up to five digits followed by two letters, which indicates the content area for the course, i.e., 5344-PH, where 'PH' indicates the course content area as Pharmacology.

When a Qualified course becomes COPE Approved, (i.e., it is submitted by a COPE Qualified Administrator along with all the relevant meeting documentation), this number can be used in promotional materials (with the COPE symbol) for reference purposes. This number must also be on any documentation provided to a doctor for submission to a state licensing board, such as an attendance slip for the course. This is necessary as state licensing boards require the COPE ID# when the course documentation is submitted to authenticate the course with COPE records; only then will states award CE credit for license renewal.

CREDIT HOUR: One (1) hour of CE credit is based on 50 minutes of instructional time. COPE only accepts for review courses of at least one (1) in duration. Additional increments of credit are in 0.5 hours, where 0.5 hour of credit is based on 25 minutes of instructional time. For example, 1.5 hours of credit = a minimum of 75 minutes of instruction; 2.0 hours of credit = a minimum of 100 minutes of instruction, etc.

EVENT: A meeting, conference, online seminar, etc. where COPE Qualified Courses are held. The event **MUST** be approved by COPE in order for the attendees to receive COPE credit for the course.

FINANCIAL/PROPRIETARY SUPPORT: Instructors must disclose on the course application any direct financial or proprietary interests they may have in any of the companies, products, pharmaceuticals or services mentioned, or intended to mention, in a presentation. Instructors must also disclose if they provide for-profit support of any kind, are a paid consultant to, an employee of, or serve as an officer on the board of companies mentioned in a presentation. This information must also be disclosed at the beginning of a presentation to the audience in a clear and unambiguous manner, both verbally, and included in any written course handout/outline. Additionally, COPE must be notified in writing if the financial/proprietary information disclosed on a course application changes at any time during the three-year qualification period of a course.

INSTRUCTOR: The person (or persons) who teach the course, and who assumes responsibility for the educational content and method of presentation of the course.

- **Principal Instructor.** The principal instructor is considered by COPE as the key individual identified with the course, and is the individual who submits the course material to COPE for review and receives all correspondence regarding its disposition.
- **Co-Instructor.** A co-instructor is an individual who, in conjunction with a principal instructor, may assist and participate in the presentation of a course, but also has the necessary qualifications to give the course independently of the principal instructor should the principal instructor be unavailable due to extenuating circumstances.
- **Adjunct Instructor.** An adjunct instructor is an individual whose main function is to support the principal instructor with the presentation or preparation of a course. An adjunct instructor may or may not be present to assist with the presentation of a course, however, an adjunct instructor cannot, under any circumstance, present a course in place, or in the absence of, the principal instructor.

QUALIFICATION: COPE Qualification takes two forms:

- Courses submitted by instructors directly to COPE are reviewed, and if they meet the criteria established by COPE, they are designated *COPE Qualified Courses*. For more information on the course review process, see the Criteria for COPE Qualification of Continuing Education handbook. Qualification of courses is awarded for a term of three (3) years from the date the statement of qualification is issued by COPE. Renewal of Qualification must occur prior to the conclusion of the qualification period.
- Providers of CE who agree to abide by COPE's criteria for administrator qualification and who submit CE Events to COPE, are designated *COPE Qualified Administrators*. For more information, see the *Information for Administrator Qualification and Instructions for COPE Event Submission* handbook for complete information.

REVIEWER: A COPE-recognized and state licensing board-endorsed optometrist who has volunteered to review courses for qualification. Reviewers serve indefinitely and are not compensated for their service. Reviewers are required to examine in detail course materials that are submitted to COPE, determine if it is in compliance with the *Criteria for Course Qualification*, and, where necessary, provide appropriate guidance for modification or adjustment.

URGENT COURSE APPROVAL: The standard processing time for course review and processing is 4-6 weeks. An additional fee of \$100 is required for urgent processing for courses requiring a shorter review time. No course will be accepted with request for review in less than 14 days.