



**Optometric Board Certification Model
Answers to
Frequently Asked Questions
of the
Joint Board Certification
Project Team**

11. Q: How many members of the Joint Board Certification Project Team are clinicians who still see patients, as opposed to being administrators only, and how will clinicians be represented on the board?

A: Eight of the twelve members actively see patients at this time. Three are currently deans or presidents of optometry colleges and one is executive director of the National Board. The four members who do not currently see patients have extensive clinical backgrounds.

12. Q: Will board certification be mandatory in order to achieve or renew my license to practice optometry?

A: Currently board certification is not tied to licensure or license renewal in any health profession. The same would apply in optometry.

13. Q: How independent will the certifying board (American Board of Optometry) be from the AOA?

A: Although the AOA will likely have representation on the certifying board, just as the other organizations represented on the JBCPT, the AOA will not be the certifying entity. Any certifying board would be a completely independent not for profit organization.

14. Q: Will board certification by and for optometrists, be an acceptable and viable designation within the medical community, government and by third party entities?

A. Any board certification process we endorse will be designed to be verifiable, credible and able to bear the scrutiny of any outside organization. It will also be designed to help the profession provide the best possible eye care to our patients. We believe that as long as we develop the process with these issues in mind, we will be prepared for review by outside organizations.

15. Q: Aren't we already board certified since we passed the National Boards?

A: The National Board of Examiners in Optometry tests entry-level competence, not competence associated with board certification. As a matter of National Board policy, having passed all three parts does not constitute having achieved board certification. Similar to other boards of other health professions, the results of the National Board exams are used by all U.S. licensing boards, to make initial licensing decisions immediately following graduation. Other certification programs that currently exist all have requirements that exceed the steps of graduation from their academic programs and passing their entry level national exams. Therefore, it seems appropriate that any meaningful optometric board certification process would assess competence beyond the entry-level requirements for licensure.

16. Q: Will state associations and local optometric societies lose their ability to provide continuing education programs for their members?

A: The JBCPT is acutely aware of the large number of quality CE programs provided at regional, state and local levels. The board certification proposal includes a means to continue to allow these CE programs. It is not intended to interfere with state CE. The state affiliates are important providers of quality continuing education programs. It is possible the number of CE offerings will increase to meet the needs of the BC-seeking ODs.

17. Q: Once ODs are board-certified, will the certification have to be renewed?

A: Yes. The JBCPT is making recommendations regarding maintenance of certification that will require ongoing education, self-assessment, testing and other activities for practitioners who have become board certified in order to maintain their board certification.

18. Q: Most professions seem to have a ten-year re-certification. Does that seem reasonable to the group?

A: Our research shows that the validity of health care professions' certification ranges from five to 10 years, and a 10-year recertification cycle may be appropriate.

19. Q: Do other health care professions have a board certification process?

A: Yes, in fact optometry is the only doctoral-level health care profession with prescribing authority that does not have a board certification process (other than the relatively new Doctorate of Nursing). Dentistry, allopathic medicine, osteopathic medicine, podiatric medicine and veterinary medicine all have board certification routes to demonstrate continued competence.

20. Q: What health care profession would be most comparable to what the project team is envisioning for optometry's board certification?

A: Probably the closest right now is family medicine, which is the most recent specialty to obtain board certification. An important goal for them was to develop a credible and attainable board certification program, which closely resembles our own priorities. Additionally, family medicine has the most advanced board certification and maintenance of certification processes of all of the 24 sub-specialties that are members of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). The family medicine model has been the leader in BC/MOC development.