WHAT ARE ABO AND NCLE

The American Board of Opticianry (ABO) and the National Contact Lens Examiners (NCLE) are national, non-profit organizations which administer voluntary certification examinations for dispensing opticians and contact lens technicians. Our purposes are to identify qualified eyewear providers by examination, urge growth of optical skills with continuing education and approve continuing education programs.

When you register for the ABO exam you will see the words National Opticianry Competency Exam (NOCE) and the NCLE exam is called the Contact Lens Registry Exam (CLRE). Look carefully because it is easy to be confused. Both exams are written to identify those individual who have the knowledge and skills needed to perform their job. Our testing service, ACT, Inc., handles the administration and the scoring of the examinations.

Do you know your job? Of course you do. You have the skills and knowledge necessary to do your job with confidence. Well, those same skills and knowledge are what you need to pass the national competency exams. Instead of proving those skills with your hands you will be answering those questions on a computer. It’s the same information, just a different method.

Think positive – passing the exams and earning ABO and NCLE certification make you more marketable. When you fill out that next employment application or write your resume, you can add that you are nationally certified. IT DOES COUNT, even if you also have a state license.

THE EXAMINATIONS

The 2 ½ hour, multiple choice examinations are written by groups of certified opticians and contact lens fitters with assistance from the testing service. The content and number of each question on the exam must fit with the Content Outline (or blueprint) of the exam. The exam questions are based on what you probably do every day. If you have hands-on experience with many different optical situations or have been in an ophthalmic training program, you MAY have a little edge, but there is nothing tricky about the exams.

Questions are created to test your ability to recall knowledge and to apply that knowledge to specific dispensing functions. There are three types of questions; some require you to recognize the correct response from the four choices. Some require you to understand and apply the information presented in the questions. Other questions require you to understand and to reorganize material presented to make the correct choice.

EXAM PREPARATION

The ABO-NCLE exams measure acquired, technical working knowledge – not how well you can remember information from a cram course. We urge you not to depend on only one preparation course or one reference material – it will not meet all of your needs. We recommend using the exam content outline and study topic list to identify areas where you need to concentrate.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You must be at least 18 years of age and have earned a high school diploma or a GED in order to take the exams. If your state licensing board regulations are different, the state requirement supersedes those of ABO and NCLE.
EXAM REGISTRATION

You MUST register to take the examination(s) on the ABO-NCLE website. You will find the registration form, a demographic survey, blueprints of the exams, this Handbook, a list of known review courses and a link to National Academy of Opticianry and the Contact Lens Society of America to order books. **PROVIDING AN E-MAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER ARE MANDATORY.** Your name and photo ID must be an exact match. That is the name that will be on the roster when you appear for your exam. Any false information or misconduct in registration, examination process or at the test site may be a violation of the ABO-NCLE Disciplinary Guidelines. Your fee, exam and score may be forfeit, and there may be other legal consequences.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION FORM

If you have a disability that keeps you from testing under standard conditions you MUST check the box on the registration form and print out the disability accommodation form. Your healthcare provider or teacher will need to verify the disability and to indicate what assistance you may need. That form must be to ABO-NCLE by the registration deadline.

CALL IF YOU DON’T HEAR FROM US

You should get an email confirmation letter soon after registering for the exam. **CHECK IT IMMEDIATELY.** If you don’t hear from us within a few days, CALL US. By calling immediately, you still may have time to register. Once the late deadline has passed you will not be allowed to register.

Soon after getting your confirmation letter, you will get an e-mail from ACT inviting you to schedule your exam. All e-mails regarding your exam will come from ACT. Please make sure you whitelist this information, or check your spam folder when you are expecting to receive an e-mail. **THE E-MAIL ADDRESS YOU NEED TO WATCH FOR IS SUPPORT @PSIONLINE.COM.** You need to log in and schedule your exam appointment as soon as possible to get the date and time of your choice, as it is first come, first served at all of the test sites. You will be provided with information such as the site address and phone number, test center rules and cancellation rules. You should go to the same web address to cancel or reschedule your appointment. You must have your username and password with you at the test location. The test proctor/supervisor may ask you to leave the exam for any of the following reasons: if you create a disturbance, if you attempt to take any materials into the testing areas or if you impersonate another person. Be advised that anyone who conveys exam content either verbally or in writing in such a way as to compromise exam security may be liable for costs necessary to rewrite the exams. ABO-NCLE has the right to take further administrative or legal action as they see fit.

TAKING THE EXAM FOR LICENSING

Although ABO-NCLE gives the examinations for certification purposes, 90% of the states that license opticians use the exams as the written part of their licensing process. Exam scores are sent to state boards after every examination. Passing the certification examination(s) however, does not automatically result in a license. **YOU MUST CONTACT YOUR STATE BOARD directly for information on the requirements of your state.**

THE EXAM SITE

If there are any difficulties at the exam site, **call PSI at 800/733-9267 option 4 immediately after the exam.** Difficulties may include problems with the computer, site staff conduct, etc. Do not wait until you get your score.
WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

In the case of a declared state or local weather emergency, contact PSI at 800/733-9267, option 7 to find out if your test site has been closed. If it has not, you are expected to be there. There will be no transfers or refunds if you do not appear.

SCORES AND SCORING

All scoring is completed electronically. Your score report will be e-mailed to you about six to eight weeks after the exam date. You will receive either a PASS or FAIL notification. There will be no numeric scores. You must earn a scaled score of 70 to pass the American Board of Opticianry (NOC) exam. The National Contact Lens Examiners (CLRE) requires a passing score of 72.

Scaled scores are not the number of questions answered correctly (raw score) and they are not the percentage of questions answered correctly. Scaling is used to convert raw scores from different test forms to a uniform score scale.

Scaled scores are used for the following reason; if the same test form was used every time, the questions would be overexposed. To prevent this, every test form is constructed to measure the same content at the same level of difficulty. Even when test forms are constructed in this way, their levels of difficulty may vary slightly because different questions appear on different exam forms. Since it would be unfair to require a candidate taking a slightly more difficult form of the test to answer as many questions correctly as a candidate taking an easier form, a statistical procedure known as equating is used to allow for the differences in question difficulty.

If raw scores were used there would be a different passing score for each form. For example, a raw passing score on test form X might be 60, while a raw passing score on form Y might be 62. Because of equating, the raw scores of 60 and 62 would equal the same passing score, although they wouldn’t look the same. Since form Y is easier than form X, a candidate would have to answer two more items correctly to pass at the same level.

If there is any question of misconduct during an exam, the score reports of the people involved will be investigated and this may delay scoring. ABO-NCLE and ACT will review each case and make a decision. Legal or administrative action may then be taken by the ABO or NCLE.

Passing the examinations will certify you for three years. During that time you must earn the required number of continuing education credits (CECs) to maintain certification.

CERTIFICATES

Congratulations. Approximately ten weeks after receiving your scores you will receive your certificate. IT WILL BE PRINTED IN THE NAME YOU USED TO REGISTER UNLESS YOU HAVE NOTIFIED US OF A CHANGE.

TRANSFER

If you MUST cancel your exam once you have scheduled your date, you must contact ABO-NCLE no later than two business days prior to your scheduled exam date. There is a $50 transfer fee to move your registration/fee to the next exam. You MUST also contact PSI to cancel your appointment.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY TRANSFER

Should you or an immediate family member (child or spouse) have a documented medical emergency that prevents you from taking the exam with less than two days notice, you must contact ABO-NCLE for instructions.
There will be a $50 transfer fee and you must provide documentation.

No transfer will be permitted or considered unless you follow these instructions. Your registration fee will be forfeit. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. THERE WILL BE NO TRANSFERS OR REFUNDS IF YOU DO NOT APPEAR FOR THE EXAM REGARDLESS OF THE REASONS.

TESTING FOR CERTIFICATION RENEWAL IS NOT PERMITTED EXCEPT WHEN REQUIRED BY A LICENSING BOARD. If that is the case, you must contact ABO-NCLE to discuss your situation.

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## STUDY TOPICS FOR THE NCLE EXAM

### BASIC OPTICAL THEORY
- Light waves
- Refraction

### STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE EYE
- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Pathology

### INSTRUMENTATION
- Keratometer
- Lensometer
- Slit lamp
- Radiuscope

### CONTACT LENS SELECTION
- Materials
- Material properties
- Designs
- Special considerations

### PRESCRIPTION ANALYSIS
- Refractive error
- Corneal topography
- Initial fit evaluation

### ORDERING AND VERIFICATION
- Parameters
- ANSI Standards

### LENS CARE SYSTEMS
- Cleaning
- Storage
- Disinfection
- In-eye drops
- Complications of non-compliance

### FOLLOW-UP VISITS
- In-office modifications
- Care systems compliance
- Problem solving

### PATIENT MANAGEMENT
- Insertion/removal procedures
- History and charting

### OFFICE MANAGEMENT
- Inventory
- Storage
- Procedures

### MULTIFOCAL, ASTIGMATIC, POST-SURGICAL AND IRREGULAR CORNEA APPLICATIONS
- Lens design
- Design application
- Measurements

### NATIONAL STANDARDS
- ASIM, ANSI, OSHA, EDA, FTC, malpractice and personal liability, Duty to Warn

ABO and NCLE do not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, national origin or disability.

**KEEP AND CONSULT THIS CANDIDATE HANDBOOK FOR REFERENCE.** It is critical that you follow the procedures, policies and deadlines outlined in this handbook. If you have questions, please write or call: