

# **EXAM CANDIDATE HANDBOOK**

## **FOR THE ABO AND NCLE NATIONAL COMPETENCY EXAMS**

American Board of Opticianry \*\* National Contact Lens Examiners

6506 Loisdale Rd., #209  
Springfield, VA 22150  
(800) 296-1379  
[www.abo-ncle.org](http://www.abo-ncle.org)

## **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.

The name of the ABO exam is the National Opticianry Competency Exam (NOCE) and the Contact Lens Examiners exam is the Contact Lens Registry Exam (CLRE). Both exams are written to identify those individual who have the knowledge and skills needed to perform their job well. 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 skill 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 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) with the ABO-NCLE office. You can request a registration form or print one from the website. Fill it out carefully and accurately. **PROVIDING AN E-MAIL ADDRESS IS 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.

## **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

If you have a disability that keeps you from testing under standard conditions, you may request special arrangements. Contact us before you register and request a form. Your healthcare provider or teacher will need to verify the disability and to indicate what assistance you may need.

## **CALL IF YOU DON'T HEAR FROM US**

You have mailed or faxed in your registration. If you don't hear from us within three (3) weeks, CALL US. Your registration may have been lost. By calling immediately, you still may have time to register. Once the deadline has passed you will not be allowed to register.

## **CONFIRMATION LETTER**

Once ABO-NCLE has processed your registration, you will get a letter confirming your registration. CHECK IT IMMEDIATELY. Look to see if your name, address, e-mail address and the exam you want to take are correct. If not, contact us quickly.

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 ADDRESSES YOU NEED TO WATCH FOR ARE testrac.com, psiexams.com and 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. ACT will provide you with information such as the site address and phone number, test center rules and cancellation rules. ACT will also handle the security of the examination. 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.

## **WEATHER CANCELLATIONS**

In the case of a declared state or local weather emergency, contact the testing site at the number provided in your appointment confirmation e-mail to find out if your test site has been cancelled. 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**

Your score report will be mailed to you about seven weeks after the exam date. You will receive either a **PASS** or **FAIL** notification. You must earn a scaled score of 70% to pass the American Board of Opticianry (NOCE). 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.

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.

## **HOW YOUR EXAM IS SCORED AND MANUAL REVIEWS**

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.

All scoring is completed electronically. The accuracy of the scores is nearly 100%. However, it is your choice to request a manual review of your response record. The results of the manual review will indicate only that the original scoring was correct or incorrect. It will not pinpoint which questions you missed. The request must be made in writing, and the fee is \$50 for each exam that is reviewed. Contact us **NO LATER THAN TWO WEEKS** after your score is released. **REQUESTS MADE AFTER THAT TIME WILL BE DENIED.** To request a manual review, send your request, along with your name, address, identification number, name of the examination and the test date to ABO-NCLE. Include a certified check or money order made payable to ABO-NCLE for this service. Do not submit a request for manual review until you have received your score report.

## **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.**

## **TRANSFERS**

If you must cancel your exam, you must do so **with ACT no later than two (s) days prior to your exam date.** You MUST also contact ABO-NCLE to request a transfer of your registration and fee to the next exam. The fee will be \$50 per exam to transfer. No transfer will be permitted or considered after your exam date. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. THERE WILL BE NO TRANSFERS OR REFUNDS IF YOU DO NOT APPEAR FOR THE EXAM REGARDLESS OF THE REASONS.**

## **ABO EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE**

### **Content Outline and Test Specifications**

<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Approx. % of Test Questions</b>
<b>ANALYZE AND INTERPRET PRESCRIPTION</b>	<b>31%</b>
<p>Analyze and interpret patient's prescription to assess patient needs and ensure visual optimum comfort, visual efficiency and cosmetic acceptability.</p> <p>Detect irregularities by applying knowledge of ophthalmic terminology to ensure that the prescription is complete.</p> <p>Recognize benefits and limitations of the prescription by determining the relationship between prescription and the patient's needs in order to prepare the order</p>	
<b>FIT AND DISPENSE SPECTACLES AND OTHER OPHTHALMIC DEVICES</b>	<b>53%</b>
<p>Identify the patient's needs and wants by taking a history, reviewing and verifying existing records, assessing previous eyewear use, identifying visual tasks and evaluating this information to fulfill the patient's needs and wants.</p> <p>Evaluate the parameters of new and old eyewear by comparing previous and current prescriptions, base curves, centering, frame size and fit, lens materials, lens thickness and weight, and multifocal position to ensure that previous visual problems are resolved and the patient's needs and wants are addressed.</p> <p>Make recommendations to the patient by determining the frame and lens type and communicating product performance to address the patient's visual requirements, needs and wants.</p> <p>Take necessary facial, ocular and frame measurements by using proper techniques and instruments to enhance proper visual performance and appearance.</p> <p>Demonstrate the use of eyewear products, explain the various features of additional lens and frame types, and recommend additional frames, lenses, contact lenses, accessories, and other ocular devices to address the patient's needs, wants and lifestyle requirements.</p> <p>Verify the ordered product by determining if lenses and frames are prepared in accordance with specifics.</p> <p>Adjust the eyewear in relation to the patient's head and face and provide follow-up services to ensure efficiency, comfort and appearance.</p> <p>Demonstrate product performance and applicability by providing education to the patient to address their needs and wants.</p>	

Work within professional and legal boundaries by recognizing one's limitations and acting within ethical, legal and professional guidelines to ensure that the patient's needs and wants are met.

**USE TASK-SPECIFIC OPHTHALMIC TOOLS, INSTRUMENTS, EQUIPMENT 16%**

Operate tools, instruments, and equipment by following manufacturer's directions (e.g. neutralize lenses, layout and edge lenses, treat lenses, assemble and adjust product) within the confines of accepted occupational safety and health standards to produce a product that is correct.

Maintain tools, instruments and equipment to ensure proper operation.

Compute and analyze ophthalmic data by applying formulae, performing computations and interpreting ophthalmic measurements to ensure that the product is accurately fabricated.

**STUDY TOPIC LIST FOR THE ABO EXAM**

**BASIC OPTICAL THEORY**

Light waves

Refraction

Lens Design

**STRUCTURE/FUNCTION OF THE EYE**

Anatomy

Function

**LENS FABRICATION**

Lens types

Layout

**MEASUREMENTS**

Facial

Frame

Measuring devices

**PRESCRIPTION ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Lensometer

Refractive error

Effective power of a lens

Base curves

**PRISM**

Decentration

prism imbalance

Correcting vertical imbalance

**MULTIFOCAL APPLICATION**

Lens types

Measurements

**ORDERING AND VERIFICATION**

general procedures on forms

Verification of prescription and

Measurements

**FRAME SELECTION**

Materials

Face shapes

Special considerations

## **NATIONAL STANDARDS**

### **(Personal liability and Professional Requirements)**

ASIM – Amer. Society of Testing Materials

ANSI – Amer. National Standards Institute

OSHA – Occupational Safety & Health Administration

FDA – Food & Drug Administration

FTC – Federal Trade Commission

Malpractice & Personal Liability and Duty to Warn

## NCLE EXAM CONTACT OUTLINE

### Content Outline and Test Specifications

Content Area	Approx. % of Test Questions
<b>PREFIT AND ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>16%</b>
Obtain/document patient's history through interview and records to determine if patient is a contact lens candidate.	
Obtain the patient's measurements by using instrumentation and testing procedures to determine the initial contact lens selection.	
Assess the gathered information and discuss lens wear options that meet the patient's visual, physiological and psychological needs.	
Select lens material/design based on previously gathered information to determine initial diagnostic lens.	
<b>DIAGNOSTIC FIT AND EVALUATION</b>	<b>25%</b>
Insert a diagnostic lens for evaluation of fit, comfort and visual performance.	
Design and order lenses based on parameters obtained to meet fitting and visual criteria.	
Evaluate lens parameters based on the results of the diagnostic fitting, objective findings and subjective responses to determine the appropriate lenses.	
<b>LENS DISPENSING AND PATIENT EDUCATION</b>	<b>29%</b>
Verify lens parameters by comparison of lenses received to lenses ordered to ensure accuracy.	
Educate the patient on all aspects of lens wear by providing verbal and written instructions and hands-on practice with the lenses to promote compliance, hands-on practice.	
Schedule appointments for follow-up evaluation.	
Assess visual acuity and fit through subjective and objective means to determine if the lenses are appropriate to dispense or need to be changed/reordered.	

## **FOLLOW-UP VISITS WITH PATIENT**

**21%**

Obtain the patient's subjective response to lens wear through interview to evaluate lens performance and patient compliance.

Observe lens fit and visual acuity objectively by using instrumentation and testing procedures to evaluate lens performance and ocular integrity.

Determine the need to modify/alter lens design/material or care regimen based on subjective responses and objective findings to improve lens fit or performance.

Discuss the need for changes in lens design or care regimen with the patient to promote education and compliance.

Make changes to the original lens or care regimen, if necessary and reassess the lens fit and performance.

Schedule future appointments to monitor lens fit and ocular integrity, promote continuity of care and assure patient awareness of new lens developments and technology.

Maintain complete and accurate patient charts and refer the patient to the original prescriber for verification of lens fit and if adverse responses are noted.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

**9%**

Maintain and control inventory of lenses and lens care products to maximize office efficiency and patient satisfaction.

Follow federal recommendations for aseptic control of lenses, instruments, tools, work surfaces and employee/patient hygiene to prevent infection.

Work within professional and legal boundaries by recognizing ones' limitations and act within ethical legal and professional guidelines to ensure that the patient's needs and wants are addressed.

## **STUDY TOPICS FOR THE NCLE EXAM**

### **BASIC OPTICAL THEORY**

### **STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE EYE**

Light waves

Anatomy

Refraction

Physiology

Pathology

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

Keratometer

Lensometer

Slit lamp

Radiuscope

## **PRESCRIPTION ANALYSIS**

Refractive error

Corneal topography

Initial fit evaluation

## **LENS CARE SYSTEMS**

Cleaning

Storage

Disinfection

In-eye drops

Complications of non-compliance

## **PATIENT MANAGEMENT**

Insertion/removal procedures

History and charting

## **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

## **CONTACT LENS SELECTION**

Materials

Material properties

Designs

Special considerations

## **ORDERING AND VERIFICATION**

Parameters

ANSI Standards

## **FOLLOW-UP VISITS**

In-office modifications

Care systems compliance

Problem solving

## **OFFICE MANAGEMENT**

Inventory

Storage

Procedures

