



OPTOMETRIST

FOREIGN CREDENTIALS REFERRAL OFFICE



WELCOME

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is the national organization representing the interests of optometrists in Canada. We are a national federation of 10 provincial associations of optometrists and represent over 4,000 members across Canada. As such, we work on behalf of the optometry profession with the government, industry, vision care patients, other health-care professionals and the public at large.

Our mission is to enhance the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care; to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of our members; and to assist doctors of optometry in practising successfully in accordance with the highest standards of patient care.

Visit our website (www.opto.ca) to learn more about who we are, our programs and projects, and other important information about the optometry profession.



*The Canadian
Association of
Optometrists*

Working as an Optometrist in Canada

Optometrists in Canada are primary eye care specialists who provide essential services to Canadians. Optometrists specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures. Examples of the services optometrists provide include comprehensive eye examinations, management of eye disease, lens and

contact lens therapy, low vision therapy and occupational vision care. Optometrists can work in a private practice or within the public health-care system. Optometrists can also work both as general practitioners or specialists and independently, in partnership or in a group practice.

There are approximately 4,300 practising optometrists in Canada. Labour shortages, however, are expected over the next several years. Moreover, as the Canadian population ages, the percentage of the population needing the services of optometrists will increase. These trends point to good employment prospects for optometrists.

Furthermore, a career as an optometrist offers many benefits, including routine hours, minimum emergency calls and a high average income.

Before You Come to Canada

There are many important things that you can do to improve your chances of success before you come to Canada.

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office (www.credentials.gc.ca) of the Government of Canada provides you with helpful resources such as the *Planning to Work in Canada?* workbook. Use these resources to find important information and to develop your job-search plan.

Language skills are important for a successful career in Canada. You will need to prove your skills in English or French. This may require that you be assessed. If you need to improve your language skills, start before you come to Canada.

After you arrive, use the Government of Canada's free settlement services, which include language training, job-search help and, in some cases, job placements. You can learn more about these services at www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/index.asp.

Your official education, work and identity documents are also important. It is much easier for you to gather your documents while still in your home country.

If your documents are neither in English nor in French, you will need to have them translated. Verify which documents and translation services are required for your occupation.

Preparing to Work as an Optometrist

Optometry is a regulated profession in Canada, which means you need a professional licence to practise.

Licensure by the provincial or territorial governing body is required and may vary slightly from province to province. If you move to a different province or territory after becoming licensed, you may need to apply for a new licence. You can use the Working in Canada tool (www.workingincanada.gc.ca) to obtain more information.

To obtain a professional designation that allows you to be licensed and registered to practise optometry, you are required to complete the following:

- A minimum of three years of undergraduate education, preferably in the sciences.
- A four-year university program in optometry, accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education.
- One year of residency training (optional).

www.cic.gc.ca

It is important for you to learn about the steps you need to take to get your credentials and qualifications recognized in Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada also recommends that you review the resources on our website for helpful information about the immigration process and living in Canada.

- Successful completion of the national examination administered by the Canadian Examiners in Optometry.
- Successful completion of the provincial board requirements where the Doctor of Optometry graduate plans to work. Visit www.opto.ca/en/optometry/career-information.html for more information.

Once in practice, optometrists are required to complete a number of continuing education courses each year to update their skills and maintain certification. The requirements for continuing education are determined by each individual regulatory authority and may differ between provinces or territories.

As an international graduate, it is important for you to understand how your credentials compare to those of workers in Canada.

International graduates may find that they are required to undertake additional assessments and educational or licensure steps in order to be eligible to practise optometry in Canada.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the optometric regulator in the province or territory in which you intend to practise to determine if you are eligible for a licence or certificate of registration to practise in that jurisdiction.

You can find out more about the additional requirements and resources available for international graduates, including bridging programs, by visiting the website of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (www.opto.ca), clicking on “Optometry,” and then choosing the “International Practitioners” tab.

You can also refer to the website of the Canadian Examiners in Optometry (www.ceo-eco.org).

For information on the assessment and licensure process in Quebec, visit the website of the École d’optométrie de l’Université de Montréal (www.opto.umontreal.ca).

For information on the assessment and licensure process in the territories, contact the territorial government.

Finding a Job in Canada

You should take time to research job requirements and develop a plan for finding work as an optometrist in Canada.

Membership in a professional association is a helpful way for you to learn about the profession in Canada, to make contacts and to access important resources. Provincial associations may also list employment opportunities on their websites. Look under the “Links” section on our website (www.opto.ca) for a list of provincial professional optometrist associations and other important organizations.

Many health institutions post jobs on their website. The Canadian Healthcare Association (www.cha.ca) publishes a directory of names and addresses of health institutions that might be helpful to you in your job search.

The Government of Canada has a website that publishes jobs offered by employers that may also be helpful for you (www.jobbank.gc.ca). Visit this website and check for optometry jobs.

Additional Resources

Citizenship and Immigration Canada
www.cic.gc.ca

Foreign Credentials Referral Office
www.credentials.gc.ca

Service Canada
www.servicecanada.gc.ca

Working in Canada Tool
www.workinginCanada.gc.ca

Canadian Association of Optometrists
www.opto.ca/en/index.html

Accreditation Council on Optometric Education
www.aoa.org/x5153.xml

Canadian Examiners in Optometry
www.ceo-eco.org

University of Waterloo International Optometric Bridging Program

[www.optometry.uwaterloo.ca/
international-optometric-bridging-program](http://www.optometry.uwaterloo.ca/international-optometric-bridging-program)

École d’optométrie de l’Université de Montréal
www.opto.umontreal.ca

Provincial and Territorial Licensing

A link to all the provincial and territorial regulators and associations can be found on the website of the Canadian Association of Optometrists.

www.opto.ca/en/about/links.html

Government of Northwest Territories
www.gov.nt.ca

Government of Nunavut
www.gov.nu.ca

Government of Yukon
www.gov.yk.ca

