

# **EXAM CANDIDATE HANDBOOK**

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

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

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## **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 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) on the ABO-NCLE website. You will find the registration form, a demographic survey, the 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 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 **MUST** check the box on the registration 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 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 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**

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 (ABO) exam. The National Contact Lens Examiners (NCLE) 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 PSI no later than two (s) days prior to your scheduled exam date.** You MUST also contact ABO-NCLE to request a transfer of your registration and fee to the next exam. 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.**

## **EMERGENCY TRANSFERS**

If you must transfer your exam after you have scheduled your appointment and it is less than two days prior to your exam, **you must contact PSI and ABO-NCLE to cancel.** There will be a \$100 fee from ABO-NCLE to transfer you to the next exam testing period. Call ABO-NCLE with a credit card to transfer prior to your exam date. Once that appointment date has passed, there will be no transfers.

## **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

### **PRISM**

Decentration

prism imbalance

Correcting vertical imbalance

### **MULTIFOCAL APPLICATION**

Lens types

Measurements

### **ORDERING AND VERIFICATION**

general procedures on forms

Verification of prescription and

Measurements

## **MEASUREMENTS**

Facial

Frame

Measuring devices

## **FRAME SELECTION**

Materials

Face shapes

Special considerations

## **PRESCRIPTION ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Lensometer

Refractive error

Effective power of a lens

Base curves

## **NATIONAL STANDARDS**

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

ASIM, ANSI, OSHA, FDA, FTC, malpractice and personal liability, Duty to Warn

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

### **BASIC OPTICAL THEORY**

Light waves

Refraction

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

Keratometer

Lensometer

Slit lamp

Radiuscope

### **PRESCRIPTION ANALYSIS**

Refractive error

Corneal topography

Initial fit evaluation

### **LENS CARE SYSTEMS**

Cleaning

Storage

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

Anatomy

Physiology

Pathology

### **CONTACT LENS SELECTION**

Materials

Material properties

Designs

Special considerations

### **ORDERING AND VERIFICATION**

Parameters

ANSI Standards

### **FOLLOW-UP VISITS**

In-office modifications

Care systems compliance

Disinfection

Problem solving

In-eye drops

Complications of non-compliance

**PATIENT MANAGEMENT**

**OFFICE MANAGEMENT**

Insertion/removal procedures

Inventory

History and charting

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