

American Board of Ophthalmology - Rules and Regulations

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I. Purpose

- A. The principal purposes of the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) are to determine the eligibility of candidates who seek certification by the ABO, to conduct examinations of eligible candidates, and to issue certificates to those who meet the ABO's requirements and pass its examinations. The intent of both initial certification and continuing certification is to assure the public that an ophthalmologist certified by the ABO has successfully completed an approved educational program and evaluation process designed to assess the medical knowledge, clinical judgment, and professionalism required to provide high-quality patient care.
- B. The Rules and Regulations apply to all physician directors, candidates, and diplomates.
- C. The ABO may amend the Rules and Regulations from time to time in such manner as it deems appropriate. All amendments will be effective from the date of adoption.

II. Mission and Principles

- A. Mission: To serve the public by certifying ophthalmologists through the verification of competencies.
- B. Principles:
 1. Certification promotes and recognizes aspirational goals, not minimum standards.
 2. Certification is a career-long process that promotes excellence through continuous improvement.
 3. Certification should be voluntary, as our founders intended.
 4. Certification should be challenging and meaningful, yet not burdensome to busy practitioners.
 5. ABO diplomates are professionals and colleagues, and we honor them accordingly.
 6. The ABO stewards its finances with integrity and transparency.
 7. The ABO is an independent certifying board of practicing ophthalmologists who collaborate whenever possible with professional societies, organizations, and other stakeholders who strive to advance excellence.

III. Nature of Certificate

- A. Until June 30, 1992, the ABO issued a Certificate that was not time-limited in its validity. The Certificate stated: The American Board of Ophthalmology hereby certifies that: Dr. (Name) has satisfactorily completed an accepted course of graduate study and clinical work and has successfully passed the examinations in Ophthalmology conducted under the authority of this Board. (Date and Seal) Issued: Date, Day, Year; Signatures of Directors of the ABO.
- B. A Certificate issued by the ABO on or after July 1, 1992 expires ten (10) years following the date of its issuance. During the ten (10) year period, the diplomate must satisfactorily complete a renewal process as defined by the ABO to obtain a new certificate upon expiration of the then-current certificate, which will expire ten (10) years thereafter. The current certificate states: The American Board of Ophthalmology hereby certifies that: Dr. (Name) has satisfactorily completed an accepted course of graduate study and clinical work and has successfully passed the examinations in Ophthalmology conducted under the authority of this Board. (Date and Seal) Issued: Date, Day, Year; This certificate is valid through December 31, Year; Signatures of Directors of the ABO.

IV. Requirements for Initial Certification

A. Professional Training

1. A candidate must have graduated from an allopathic or osteopathic medical school accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). If a candidate

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graduated from a medical school located in a country other than the United States or Canada, the candidate must submit a certificate from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG).

A candidate entering an ophthalmology training program must have undertaken a post-graduate year 1 (PGY-1) in a program in the United States accredited by the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) or a program in Canada accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. The resident must have primary responsibility for patient care in the fields of emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, neurology, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, or surgery.

For programs in the United States using either an integrated or joint preliminary year/ophthalmology format, the PGY-1 must comprise direct patient care experiences and must include nine months of broad experience in direct patient care and three months of experience in ophthalmology. Residents must participate in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with varied diseases and conditions. Since July 1, 2021, either an integrated or joint preliminary year format is required.

2. The program chair of the initial ophthalmology training program attended by a candidate must verify and attest that the candidate has completed an accredited PGY-1 in the United States or in Canada prior to the start of the ophthalmology residency.

A candidate must satisfactorily complete an entire formal graduate residency training program in ophthalmology (PGY-4 or higher) approved by the Ophthalmology Review Committee and accredited by the ACGME. For applicants who are graduates of United States programs (PGY-4 or higher), education in ophthalmology must be provided in one of two formats:

- a) Integrated ophthalmology format: All 48 months of education are under the authority and direction of the ophthalmology program director.
- b) Joint preliminary year/ophthalmology format: This includes a preliminary year of graduate medical education followed by 36 months in an ophthalmology program.

For applicants who are graduates of Canadian programs (PGY-5 or higher), education in ophthalmology must be 48 months long and provided by a Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada-accredited residency program. The candidate's department chair and program director are required to verify satisfactory completion of an entire formal graduate ophthalmology residency training program in medical and surgical care.

3. When a resident's training has occurred in more than one residency program, an interim evaluation must be completed by the initial program. Less than 6 months' service in an accredited program is not acceptable as part of the required training in ophthalmology. It is the responsibility of the second (or final) program to obtain the interim evaluation from the initial program or a subsequent program. The second (or final) program, in its satisfactory completion document, must evaluate all competencies, considering any deficiencies noted in the interim evaluation by the preceding program(s).
4. It is the responsibility of the candidate to confirm, with the assistance of the department chair and program director, the ACGME approval status of a residency program. Details of the categories of approval are provided in the ACGME Manual of Structure and

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Functions, as amended or updated. If a residency program loses approval or is withdrawn during a candidate's training, the candidate must complete the remaining required number of months of training in another ACGME-accredited program.

The ABO recognizes that leaves of absence for vacation, medical issues, parental leave, or other personal reasons are essential for resident well-being and may be granted at the discretion of the institution's department chair and/or residency program director. Residency training in ophthalmology traditionally comprises 48 months following graduation from medical school, including a 12-month internship and at least 36 months of ACGME-accredited ophthalmology training.

To be eligible to sit for the ABO written and oral examinations, the Board requires that a satisfactory rating be confirmed by the residency program for each of the ACGME competencies. Depending on the length of absence or the inability to accomplish residency educational goals during the traditional period, the required time for graduate medical education may be extended accordingly. Residency program leadership and the institutional graduate medical education offices, not the ABO, determine the need for any extension of residency training and the ultimate completion date for each resident.

5. Doctors of Osteopathy who graduated from programs accredited by the ACGME are Board Eligible for seven (7) years and are permitted to pursue American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) certification. This includes residents who graduated from a program that transitioned to ACGME-accreditation during their training. Residents who graduated before the program was ACGME-accredited are not eligible for ABO certification. Therefore, individuals who graduate from an ACGME-accredited osteopathic residency who were in the program as of January 1 of the year the program was accredited, are eligible to pursue ABO certification. While the Board recognizes there are doctors of osteopathy who graduate from ACGME or RCPSA-accredited allopathic programs, this policy pertains only to doctors of osteopathy who graduate from ACGME-accredited osteopathic programs.
6. The Board Eligibility Policy requires successful completion of ABO certification requirements (both written and oral examinations) within seven (7) years of residency graduation. During the seven-year Board Eligibility period, candidates may refer to themselves as "Board Eligible" and may:
 - Sit for the Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) each time it is offered until successful.
 - Sit for the Oral Examination, after successful completion of the WQE.

B. Licensure

1. The candidate must maintain a valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in all states in the United States, its territories, and/or Canadian provinces in which the physician holds a license. A candidate who does not have a valid and unrestricted license in each state, territory, and/or Canadian province in which the physician has a license is not eligible to sit for an ABO examination.
2. A candidate shall be deemed to meet the requirements of Section IV.B.1 if and for so long as the person is on full-time active duty at a military installation as a physician in any branch of the United States armed services and has a valid and unrestricted military medical license.

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C. Examination of Candidates

1. To become Board Certified, each candidate must pass a Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) and an Oral Examination administered by the ABO.
 2. The WQE is a 250 multiple-choice question examination designed to evaluate the breadth and depth of the basic science and clinical knowledge of candidates who have satisfactorily completed an accredited program of education in ophthalmology. It is necessary to pass this examination before being admitted to the Oral Examination. The WQE is administered at nationally distributed test centers on one assigned day in an approximately 5-hour testing period that includes a tutorial and break time. Approved candidates are provided with the information necessary to schedule a test appointment and are responsible for scheduling a test appointment at a test center. The topics covered in the WQE include:
 - Lens and Cataract
 - Cornea, External Disease, and Anterior Segment
 - Glaucoma
 - Neuro-Ophthalmology
 - Oculofacial Plastic, Lacrimal, and Orbital Surgery
 - Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
 - Optics and Refractive Management
 - Retina, Vitreous, and Intraocular Tumors
 - Uveitis
 3. The Oral Examination is the second evaluation in the initial Board Certification process.
 4. During the Oral Examination, a candidate is presented with patient management problems (PMPs), each of which represents a patient or clinical situation, and is asked to identify how s/he would care for that patient. Oral Examinations are given by appointment within a half-day period (four hours). The half-day period is divided into three 50-minute, two-topic examinations to allow multiple examiners to assess the candidate's patient care ability (six total topics). The pooled group of examiners is referred to as a panel. The paired examination topic areas are:
 - Anterior Segment of the Eye; Optics, Visual Physiology, and Correction of Refractive Error
 - Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus; External Eye and Adnexa
 - Neuro-Ophthalmology and Orbit; Posterior Segment of the Eye
- D. The administration and grading of all examinations shall be at the sole discretion of the ABO. All examinations shall be administered and graded without discrimination to ensure a fair and unbiased examination for each candidate. The candidate shall be notified of his/her test results via email. The decision of the ABO as to the results of an examination shall be final and conclusive. To ensure confidentiality, examination results will not be given over the telephone.

V. ABO Eligibility Timeframe

- A. The ABO Eligibility Policy requires successful completion of Board Certification requirements (both written and oral examinations) within seven (7) years of residency graduation. During the seven-year eligibility period, candidates may refer to themselves as Board Eligible and may:

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- sit for the Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) each time it is offered until successful; and
 - sit for the Oral Examination, after successful completion of the WQE. An extension of the seven-year eligibility period may be considered on a case-by-case basis and may be granted for extenuating circumstances, for example, to accommodate a candidate's significant health problem.
 - If a candidate fails to register by the deadline for an examination that is scheduled in the final year of his/her eligibility, s/he is no longer considered Board Eligible following the registration deadline date.
- B. Grace Period: January 2023 – December 2025: As of January 1, 2023, individuals who are no longer Board Eligible will have up to three years in which to obtain Board Certification contingent upon passing the Written Qualifying Examination in 2023 or 2024 and/or the oral examination by the fall 2025 exam administration.
- 2023-2024: Individuals who need the WQE must register for and pass the 2023 or 2024 WQE to be able to pursue Board Certification. Individuals who do not register for, do not take, or fail the 2024 WQE can no longer pursue Board Certification. Individuals who need the Oral Exam: can register for and take the 2023 and 2024 oral exams.
 - 2025: Individuals who need the Oral Exam can register for and take the 2025 oral exams. Individuals who do not register for the fall oral exam, do not take, or fail can no longer pursue Board Certification.

During the three-year grace period, individuals who choose to continue to pursue Board Certification may not refer to themselves as "Board Eligible" and can sit for the Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) in 2023 and/or 2024 and sit for the Oral Examination, after successful completion of the WQE up until fall 2025. Non-Board Eligible candidates will not receive refunds for cancelled or no-show examinations.

VI. Applications for Board Certification

- A. A candidate who wishes to be certified by the ABO shall complete an application on the ABO web site and must agree to be bound by the ABO Rules and Regulations. Information regarding how to access the application system on the ABO web site, including log-in information, can be obtained from the department chair or program director of an accredited residency program, the ABO office, or the ABO website (abop.org).
- B. A candidate who wishes to be considered for the WQE must apply (including submission of all supporting data and verifications furnished directly by others) by the posted deadline. If a completed application and all required supporting data are submitted after the posted deadline, the application will not be valid, and the application fee shall be returned (less an administration fee).
- C. Each application timely received by the ABO shall be reviewed for purposes of determining whether the application is complete. The application shall be considered complete only when all supporting data required by the application, including all verifications, are received. The ABO will notify the candidate of any deficiencies in the application, but this notice shall not extend the filing deadline. If an application is not complete, the application shall not be considered or acted upon for any purpose until it is fully completed in the ABO's determination.

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- D. The ABO may make or cause to be made inquiries of all persons and institutions reasonably believed to have information bearing upon or relevant to a determination of whether the candidate meets the ABO's requirements for examination, including, without limitation, persons and institutions named in the application.
- E. If the ABO determines that a candidate who has applied does not meet the ABO's requirements for examination, the candidate will be notified of the reason(s) why the candidate does not meet the ABO's requirements for examination. The notice may include recommendation(s) for the candidate to remedy each determined deficiency and the notice may require a response. A candidate has the right to appeal the decision in writing. A candidate's appeal will be reviewed by the Credentials Committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting, which may jeopardize the ability of the candidate to sit for that examination if that meeting were to occur after the application deadline. A determination by the Credentials Committee is final and conclusive. A subsequent application submitted by the candidate will not be considered by the ABO if it exhibits any of the deficiencies previously identified by the Credentials Committee.
- F. Candidates who apply to take the WQE and Oral Examination must affirm that the information they provide in their applications is true and accurate. If (1) any misrepresentation is discovered in the application or in any other information submitted to the ABO or in the identity of a person applying to take or taking an examination, (2) any financial or other benefit is offered by a candidate to any director, officer, employee, proctor, or other agent or representative of the ABO in order to obtain a right, privilege or benefit not usually granted by the ABO to similarly situated candidates, or (3) any irregular behavior before, during, or after an examination including, but not limited to, copying questions or answers, sharing information, questions, or answers, using notes, or re-creating all or portions of the examination by memory or otherwise giving or receiving aid, is discovered by observation, statistical analysis of answer files, or otherwise, the candidate shall be given written notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Rules and Regulations. If the ABO determines that a violation has occurred, the ABO may permanently bar the person(s) involved in the violation from all future examinations, invalidate the results of prior examinations taken by the person(s), withhold or revoke the Certificate of the person(s), and/or take other action. If sanctions are imposed pursuant to the Rules and Regulations, the ABO may notify interested third parties of its action and may post a summary of the action and the name of the candidate or diplomate on its website or in other publications or communications.
- G. If the ABO has reasonable grounds to believe that irregular behavior may have compromised the integrity of an examination, the ABO will make every reasonable effort to withhold the scores of only those candidates directly implicated in the irregularity or who may have benefited from the irregularity. Nevertheless, in some instances, the evidence of irregularity, though sufficiently strong to cast doubt on the validity of scores, may not enable the ABO to identify the specific candidate(s) involved in the irregularity. In such circumstances, the ABO may withhold the scores of candidate(s) not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, may require those candidates to take an additional examination later to ensure the validity of all scores.
- H. The WQE, the Oral Examination, and other assessment instruments such as Quarterly Questions® (QQ®) are copyrighted by the ABO, and the ABO will strictly enforce its rights with respect to these materials. The examination materials (questions and visuals) are the sole property of the ABO and shall not be removed from the test area or reproduced in any way. Any reproduction of the examination materials, in whole or in part, is illegal and may subject

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- the candidate to sanctions. No candidate shall be permitted, while taking a WQE, an Oral Examination, or Quarterly Questions®, to record, copy, transmit, or retain any part or all of the examination on any device of any nature whatsoever. No recorder, camera, cellular phone, or any device that has the capability to record, copy, transmit, or retain pictures, text, or sound may be brought into a WQE or Oral Examination. Notes, scratch paper, textbooks, calculators, and/or other reference materials are also prohibited. Any attempt to recreate any portion of an examination or assessment exercise from memory or otherwise is strictly prohibited.
- I. Candidates must electronically agree to these rules during the examination registration process.
 - J. Candidates who participate in a WQE or Oral Examination must agree to the policies and disclosures described in the Candidate Procedures Manuals (Appendices A and B), including the Candidate Agreement.
 - J. All applications and registration information for the WQE and separately for the Oral Examination shall be accompanied by a fee payable to the ABO in the amount of the application fee then in effect. No application will be complete until the fee has been received. A candidate who cancels or fails to appear for a WQE or Oral Examination for which s/he has been scheduled will not be scheduled for another such test until s/he pays to the ABO a new fee in the amount then in effect.
 - K. The fees shall be established by the ABO Board of Directors based on the actual and anticipated costs of the ABO in the examination of applicants and the administration of its business.

VII. Certification Pathway for Internationally Trained Ophthalmologists Practicing in the United States

- A. The criteria for the internationally trained ophthalmologist (ITO) program are updated annually on the ABO's web site. In summary, the applicant must:
 - Have a current valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the United States for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years. A license that permits practice only at a specific academic institution is not considered "unrestricted" for the purposes of this pathway.
 - Have been practicing in the United States for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years.
 - Have a certificate from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG).
 - Be in active practice in ophthalmology and have full surgical privileges.
- B. Application for admission into the ITO program requires:
 - Submission of the online application form and materials, including: contact/biographical information, medical school education, post-graduate ophthalmology training, fellowship training, list of all current active and unrestricted medical license(s), ECFMG certificate, attestation of ophthalmic practice, documentation of surgical privileges, peer letters of recommendation, personal statement, copy of CV, attestation & agreement.
 - A nonrefundable application fee.
- C. Upon review and approval of these materials, participants must then qualify to take the ABO Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) before the WQE registration deadline by completing the following activities:

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- Practice-Based Learning and Improvement: Participation in an ABO-designated activity designed to promote quality improvement.
 - Systems-Based Practice: Participate in an ABO-designated activity designed to promote patient safety.
- D. Applicants who successfully complete these requirements must then pass both the WQE and the Oral Examination within seven years of application approval in order to become Diplomates of the American Board of Ophthalmology and earn a 10-year, time-limited certificate. ITO candidates are not considered Board Eligible and should not use the designation to describe themselves.

VIII. Participation in Continuing Certification

- A. In accordance with standards established by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), of which the ABO is a founding member, all certificates issued by the ABO since 1992 have been time-limited, that is, valid for a period of 10 years. Diplomates may renew their certificate through satisfactory completion of a process that conforms to the ABMS standards for Continuing Certification. The components are as follows:
- Medical License: Maintain a valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in all states, territories and/or Canadian provinces in which s/he holds a license;
 - Continuing Medical Education (CME): Earn and attest to completion of at least 250 AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™ over the 10 years of their current certification. CME must include:
 - At least 200 CME credits relevant to ophthalmology
 - At least 80 CME credits designed for self-assessment;
 - Patient Safety: Complete at least one patient safety activity;
 - Quarterly Questions®: For at least 5 years out of the 10-year renewal cycle, achieve a passing score on the cognitive, longitudinal assessment; and successfully answer at least 10 article-based questions; and
 - Improvement in Medical Practice: Learn about and demonstrate quality improvement through Quarterly Questions® and a variety of designated activities on the Improvement in Medical Practice menu.
- B. Continuing Certification Access and Fees: Diplomates access all Continuing Certification activities via the ABO website. To access the ABO website, diplomates must log in with a current email address and a password. Diplomates are required to pay the Continuing Certification annual fee prior to accessing any Continuing Certification activities or requirements. The ABO is committed to keeping the monetary and administrative expenses of the Continuing Certification process reasonable. Diplomates in active duty United States military service may request a 50% discount on Continuing Certification fees.
- C. Previously Certified Diplomates: Ophthalmologists whose ABO certification has lapsed can participate in the Continuing Certification Fast Track Process by completing all requirements within a 3-year timeframe. Upon successful completion of these steps, former diplomates will earn a new certificate, valid for 10 years, and will be listed as "Participating in Continuing Certification" on the ABO's online "Verify a Physician" tool.
- D. Non-Time-Limited Diplomates: Diplomates who hold non-time-limited certificates issued before 1992 are eligible to participate in Continuing Certification without affecting their original certificate, as follows: Non-time-limited diplomates who wish to recertify can participate in the Continuing Certification Fast Track Process by completing all Continuing Certification requirements within a 3-year timeframe. Upon successful completion of these steps, non-time-limited diplomates will earn a new voluntary certificate, valid for 10 years,

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and will be listed as "Participating in Continuing Certification" on the ABO's online "Verify a Physician" tool. The diplomate's original certificate does not expire.

- E. Certificate Extension Policy: This policy applies only to diplomates who are transitioning to the 5-year Quarterly Questions requirement (defined as possessing a certificate expiring December 31, 2021 through December 31, 2023) and who:
- Do not have a successful Demonstration of Ophthalmic Cognitive Knowledge (DOCK) examination on file in their current 10-year certification period.
 - Are up to date on all other Continuing Certification requirements as of year 10, including all activities and fees as indicated on the Continuing Certification status page. Being "up to date" in Quarterly Questions is defined as having attempted all available years of questions.
 - Diplomates with a certificate expiring in 2021 are eligible for up to 3 one-year extensions.
 - Diplomates with a certificate expiring in 2022 are eligible for up to 2 one-year extensions.
 - Diplomates with a certificate expiring in 2023 are eligible for 1 one-year extension.

Note: Diplomates will have up to 10 attempts to accrue 5 years of passing scores of Quarterly Questions, similar to diplomates who commence Continuing Certification after the transition phase. However, if a diplomate elects not to attempt QQ in a given year, the eligibility period will not be prolonged. Similarly, if a diplomate fails QQ 6 times and it is mathematically impossible for him/her to accrue 5 years of passing scores, the diplomate's certificate will be revoked.

An extension is valid for one calendar year, during which time the ABO will continue to report the diplomate's status as "Board Certified." However, no hard-copy certificate with a new expiration date will be issued. During the extension year, diplomates are required to pay the annual Continuing Certification fee.

Diplomates who successfully complete all required activities will receive a new 10-year time-limited certificate, effective January 1 of the following year. Diplomates who do not complete Continuing Certification by the close of the extension period will no longer be board certified and will be listed on the ABO website and its directories as not certified. Diplomates whose certification has lapsed may earn a new certificate by completing the Certificate Reinstatement Process.

IX. Public Reporting of Certification and Continuing Certification Participation

- A. The ABO provides a service on its website that allows the public to search for Board Certified ophthalmologists and to verify both Board Certification and current participation in Continuing Certification. The information details the physician's certification history with the ABO. The information displayed is as follows:
1. Name: Last, First, Middle
 2. Location: City, State, Zip Code
 3. Continuing Certification Participation: current participation is represented as a badge of professional achievement and the statement, "Participating in Continuing Certification."

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4. If a diplomate has a non-time-limited certificate and is not voluntarily participating in Continuing Certification, the badge of professional achievement and text are not displayed.
- B. Certification Status
1. Certified
 - Non-time-limited certificate. Physicians certified prior to 1992 were awarded with certificates before the recertification program was introduced. These ophthalmologists are encouraged, but not required, to participate in the Continuing Certification program.
 - Time-limited certificate. Physicians certified in 1992 and thereafter are required to recertify every 10 years through Continuing Certification – a program of career-long learning and quality improvement.
 2. Not Certified – The ophthalmologist is not ABO certified.
 3. Participating in Continuing Certification - Ophthalmologists who are participating in Continuing Certification are Board Certified and engaged in a structured program of career-long learning designed to help them stay up to date in practice. This patient-centered process includes continuing medical education, patient safety activities, knowledge assessments, and quality improvement. Like certification, Continuing Certification is not required to practice medicine, but all ophthalmologists certified in 1992 and thereafter must participate in the program as a condition of their certification. Certified ophthalmologists who are completing the Continuing Certification process on time, and in accordance with the program rules, are listed as Participating in Continuing Certification.
 4. Certification History: Dates of initial certification and recertification.
- C. Public Reporting of Certification - Other Statuses
1. Clinically Inactive: The ABO recognizes that some diplomates leave the practice of ophthalmology but may wish to remain ABO Certified. Diplomates who have become clinically inactive and are therefore unable to complete the Improvement in Medical Practice activity requirement of Continuing Certification may continue to remain ABO Certified by completing the other Continuing Certification requirements during the Continuing Certification cycle, including maintaining a valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine. Clinically inactive status is determined by the ABO on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the diplomate. If a diplomate designated by the ABO as clinically inactive returns to clinical activity in any capacity, the diplomate must report this to the ABO in writing immediately. Diplomates who are approved for this designation, will be reported as “ABO Certified – Clinically Inactive.” This designation will be printed on the diplomate’s ABO Certificate and will be publicly reported to the ABMS and will be noted as such on the ABO’s “Verify a Physician” webpage.
 2. Retired: Retired status is available to diplomates who have voluntarily concluded medical practice. A diplomate who is no longer engaged in the active practice of ophthalmology may notify the ABO to establish Retired status by submitting a form to the ABO office acknowledging that s/he is no longer engaged in the practice of ophthalmology. Diplomates will be publicly reported as “Retired” along with their certification history. Retired status is not available to diplomates who have involuntarily suspended practice, for example, to avoid a disciplinary action. Retired status is also not available to diplomates who voluntarily suspended practice with the intention to return at a later date. This includes but is not limited to temporary leaves

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of absence or temporary interruption of current practice for illness or disability. If a diplomate designated by the ABO as retired returns to clinical practice in any capacity, the diplomate must report this to the ABO in writing immediately. Requests to modify a diplomate's retired status will be evaluated by the ABO and determinations made on a case-by-case basis.

3. Revocation: If the ABO revokes or suspends a diplomate's certificate, places the diplomate on probation, or imposes conditions upon the diplomate's certificate, the ABO may also require the diplomate to surrender his/her certificate and copies thereof to the ABO immediately upon notice of the determination. Suspension or probation of a diplomate's certificate may be elected by the ABO in lieu of revocation if the ABO wishes to mirror the actions of a licensing entity, await the outcome of an investigation or a disciplinary proceeding, or other reasons. During a period of suspension, the diplomate is reported as not certified. During a period of probation, the diplomate is reported as certified but on probation as long as the conditions of probation are being met by the diplomate. The ABO may notify the ABMS and any other party of any action taken by the ABO, and it may post a summary of the action on its website and/or publish a summary or a complete copy of the decision itself.

X. Candidate and Diplomate Standards

- A. A candidate or diplomate must maintain a valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in all states in the United States, its territories, and/or Canadian provinces in which the physician holds a license. A candidate or diplomate shall be deemed to meet these requirements if and for so long as the person is on full-time active duty at a military installation as a physician in any branch of the United States armed services, has a valid and unrestricted military medical license, and is providing medical care and treatment on the military installation to members of the United States armed services and eligible recipients. Any restriction on one's license may result in action by the ABO, including but not limited to certification probation, suspension, or revocation.
- B. Licensing Entity Actions Considered Restrictions: The ABO considers any action by a licensing board to be a restriction on a physician's medical license regardless of whether: (i) a licensing entity unilaterally imposes the restriction; or (ii) the outcome is part of an agreement entered between the physician and a licensing entity; or (iii) any other action takes place which leads to the same outcome with respect to the physician's medical license, including but not limited to:
 - a licensing entity revokes a diplomate's or candidate's license;
 - a diplomate or candidate resigns, suspends, or returns a license in anticipation of or to prevent a licensing entity from taking a final action or from the threat of it taking an action against a diplomate's or candidate's medical license;
 - a licensing entity suspends a diplomate's or candidate's license;
 - a licensing entity places a diplomate's or candidate's license on probation; or
 - a licensing entity places conditions or requirements on a diplomate's or candidate's license (including, but not limited to, supervision, chaperoning during the examination of patients, documentation standards, documentation review, additional training beyond that required of all physicians for the continuing licensure, continuing education, limitations placed on usual scope of practice) regardless of whether or not such conditions or requirements are imposed by order of the licensing

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entity or are the result of a voluntary agreement or arrangement between the physician and the licensing entity.

ABO may consider certain non-disciplinary limitations on an individual's license to not be a license restriction (such as limiting an individual's medical practice to the specialty of ophthalmology until a minimum number of clinical training years in the United States are performed).

C. Diplomate or Candidate Transgressions

1. In addition to a restriction on a diplomate's or candidate's license as described in Section X.B, other discipline or communication with respect to a candidate or diplomate's medical license, administrative or otherwise, along with other acts of misconduct, can be reviewed by the ABO. The ABO will consider taking action against a candidate or diplomate if any of the following occur, each of which is considered a transgression:

- the individual violates any ABO rule, regulation, or policy;
- the individual's actions or inactions affect the process for initial certification or continuing certification or the terms and conditions related to the same;
- the individual makes a misstatement or omission of a material fact in an application or in any other information submitted to the ABO;
- the individual presents or distributes, or aides or assists another person(s) to present or distribute, a forged document or other written instrument purporting to have been issued by or under the authority of the ABO as evidence that a diplomate or candidate or any other person(s) is currently or was previously certified by the ABO, when that is not the case, or claiming orally or in writing, or assisting another person(s) to claim, orally or in writing, that a diplomate or candidate or any other person(s) is currently or was previously certified by the ABO, when that is not the case;
- issuance of a Certificate contrary to or in violation of any ABO rule, regulation, or policy;
- ineligibility of the individual to whom the Certificate was issued to receive the Certificate;
- engaging in conduct that disrupts an examination or that could reasonably be interpreted as threatening or abusive toward any examinee, proctor, staff, examiner, or Director;
- failure to cooperate in any investigation, hearing, or appeal conducted by the ABO, even if the diplomate or candidate is not the subject of the investigation;
- the individual is convicted of a misdemeanor or felony;
- the individual enters a guilty, *nolo contendere* plea, deferred adjudication status, or any other type of action or resolution as part of a criminal justice matter;
- the individual is issued a letter of concern or reprimand or a similar concept by a licensing entity;
- the individual demonstrates questionable or poor judgment, unethical behavior, or immoral personal or professional behavior, regardless of

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whether such conduct affects the individual's status with a licensing entity;
or

- conduct related to or unrelated to a diplomate's practice that represents, in the judgment of the ABO, either: (i) a risk to the safety of patients, members of the diplomate's health care team or the public; or (ii) a threat to the trustworthiness of the profession or of ABO certification.
2. Chemical Dependency Treatment: A candidate or diplomate who has voluntarily entered a rehabilitation program for chemical dependency or a practice improvement plan with the approval of a licensing entity will not be considered, for purposes of this Section, to have a restriction on his/her license, provided the physician maintains compliance with the rehabilitation program and all terms or conditions established by the licensing entity. The physician must provide a written notice and documentation as outlined in Section X.D under these circumstances. The ABO reserves the right to require proof of compliance with the rehabilitation program for a length of time as determined by the Credentials Committee prior to being permitted to participate in ABO programs or examination.

D. Obligation to Notify ABO of Actions Against Medical License

1. A candidate or diplomate must provide written notice to the ABO Chief Executive Officer of any action, preliminary or final, taken by a licensing entity within 60 days of receiving notice from the licensing entity of such action. A candidate or diplomate is responsible for providing written notice to the ABO Chief Executive Officer when the action by a licensing entity expires or is otherwise no longer in effect. As part of any written notice to the Chief Executive Officer, a candidate or diplomate must include a copy of all correspondence and documentation (i) received from the licensing entity; (ii) sent by or on behalf of the candidate or diplomate to the licensing entity relating to the event(s) which resulted in the licensing entity taking a final action; and (iii) practice status in each state they have (or had) a license, and when they stopped practicing in any state in which they were previously licensed. Failure by a diplomate to notify the ABO within 60 days of any action on a diplomate's licensure by a licensing entity may result in immediate suspension of a diplomate's certification until such time that the ABO can investigate the matter. Failure by a candidate for Board Certification to notify the ABO within 60 days of any action on a candidate's licensure by a licensing entity may result in the immediate suspension of the candidate's Board Eligibility, including sitting for any examinations, until such time that the ABO can investigate the matter.
2. Each licensing entity may use different terminology to describe an action affecting a candidate's or diplomate's medical license. The terms a licensing entity may use with respect to an action may include but are not limited to: revocation; surrender; suspension; sanction; reprimand; disciplinary action; administrative matter; practice improvement; probation; restricted license; letter of concern or admonishment; special conditions or requirements; or, a no action letter. An action taken by a licensing entity may be indefinite in duration or have a defined period of applicability or result in the conclusion that the licensing entity is not taking any action with respect to the candidate's or diplomate's medical license. If a licensing entity characterizes its decision as an action, it is not relevant for purposes of the ABO's decision-making that a candidate or diplomate may wish to consider an appeal in any forum with respect to a final action taken by a licensing entity.

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3. A candidate or diplomate is required to respond in a timely, accurate, and complete manner to any correspondence from the ABO. The candidate or diplomate is responsible for ensuring that the ABO has the candidate's or diplomate's current email and physical mailing address, both of which will be used for official ABO correspondence. Failure to respond in a timely, accurate, and complete manner may be independent grounds for discipline. With respect to a candidate who is not responsive or does not provide timely, accurate, and complete information, the ABO reserves the right to permanently or temporarily suspend the candidate's board eligibility and application materials, including but not limited to barring an individual from sitting for an examination. With respect to a diplomate who is not responsive or does not provide timely, accurate, and complete information, the ABO reserves the right to take disciplinary action including, but not limited to, revocation of the diplomate's Certificate.
- E. ABO Response to a Diplomate's or Candidate's Restriction or Transgression: Process and Appeal Rights
1. Review of Transgressions
 - a. If the transgression does not violate the ABO's Rules and Regulations, the ABO staff may decide, with or without any additional information provided by the diplomate or candidate, that no further action by the ABO is warranted. The ABO may send a letter to the diplomate or candidate, informing them that the ABO received notification of the transgression and that no further action will be taken.
 - b. If the transgression may violate the ABO's Rules and Regulations, the ABO will gather information as it sees fit and is available and will consider additional actions as specified in X.E.1-8.
 2. If the issue is a licensing entity action which results in the loss of medical board licensure under any condition—temporary suspension, suspension, or revocation (as specified in X.B: Candidate and Diplomate Standards)—the ABO may suspend Board Certification/Board Eligibility immediately and will consider additional actions as specified in X.E.1-8. The ABO will notify the candidate or diplomate in writing if immediate suspension occurs under this section.
 3. In all cases where the issue may violate the ABO's Rules and Regulations, the ABO will contact the diplomate or candidate via email or US mail to request information with respect to the restriction or transgression within 30 days of the request. The letter will indicate that the ABO plans to review the action further. However, when a final action has been taken by a state licensing entity to revoke a diplomate's medical license, the diplomate or candidate will not be asked to provide additional information, and the Credentials Committee Chair and CEO can make a recommendation to revoke a candidate's board eligibility or a diplomate's Certificate to the Board of Directors without full Credentials Committee review. The candidate or diplomate will not be eligible to participate in any of the appeal processes described in Section X.E.7, and the matter will go directly to the Board of Directors for consideration.
 4. Upon receipt of a diplomate or candidate response or the end of the 30-day timeframe for a response, ABO staff may consult with the ABO Credentials Committee Chair and CEO to determine if further review is merited.

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5. If further review is merited, the case will go to the full Credentials Committee for adjudication. All information submitted by the candidate or diplomate will be reviewed by the Credentials Committee.
6. If a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Credentials Committee members present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D), such action shall be considered the act of the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee may take any of the following actions:
 - a. Approve a motion that no further action is warranted against the candidate or diplomate. A letter will be sent to the candidate or diplomate indicating such.
 - b. Send a letter of concern or reprimand (or any similar term) to the candidate or diplomate.
 - c. Suspend, revoke, or place on probation a candidate's board eligibility or diplomate's Certificate because the candidate or diplomate does not satisfy Section X.A (i.e., the candidate or diplomate does not have a valid and unrestricted medical license in all states in the United States, its territories, and/or Canadian provinces in which the physician holds a license). The candidate or diplomate will not be eligible for an appeal and will not be allowed to submit additional information to the Credential Committee or Board of Directors. The matter will go directly to the Board of Directors for consideration.
 - d. Suspend, revoke, or place on probation a candidate's board eligibility or diplomate's Certificate because the candidate or diplomate has committed a transgression under Section X.C.
 - e. Any other action that the Credential Committee deems appropriate.

7. Appeals

If the candidate or diplomate is eligible for and requests to participate in the appeal process, the appeal will be handled in the following manner:

- a. The Credentials Committee shall notify the candidate or diplomate of the date and time of the appeal. All appeals shall be held via a teleconference call. The candidate or diplomate may have an attorney participate in the appeal in accordance with instructions provided by the Credentials Committee.
- b. As part of the appeal process, the Credentials Committee may gather information as it sees fit. The candidate or diplomate will have the right to submit information that has not previously been provided within the timeframe and documentation limits required by the Credentials Committee.
- c. The Chair of the Credentials Committee, or a person designated by the Chair, will call the meeting to order to consider the candidate or diplomate's appeal. A member of the Credentials Committee will begin the proceeding by providing an overview of the basis for the recommended discipline. The candidate or diplomate, including the individual's attorney, may present oral information to the Credentials Committee. If the candidate or diplomate is asked questions during the meeting, the candidate or diplomate is expected to answer the questions truthfully and completely. The meeting may only be recorded or transcribed upon the terms and conditions and in the manner

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- determined by the Credentials Committee. The Chair of the Credentials Committee, or a person designated by the Chair, will determine when the meeting is complete and then excuse the candidate or diplomate and the individual's attorney from the meeting.
- d. Once the candidate or diplomate and the individual's attorney are excused, the Credentials Committee will consider the diplomate's appeal. If a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Credentials Committee members present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D), a letter shall be sent to the candidate or diplomate informing the diplomate of the decision and that the matter will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for a final disposition.
8. The Board of Directors will consider the decision of the Credentials Committee relating to the candidate or diplomate (and the appeal, if applicable), and:
- a. If a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Board of Directors members present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D) endorsing the Credentials Committee decision, the matter will be considered concluded, and a letter will be sent to the candidate or diplomate.
 - b. If a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Board of Directors members present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D) which does not endorse the Credentials Committee's decision, the candidate or diplomate will be sent a letter and will be offered the opportunity to provide additional written information. The matter will then be re-considered by the Credentials Committee, utilizing any additional information, but without the presence of the candidate or diplomate or the candidate's or diplomate's attorney.
 - c. Upon reconsideration by the Credentials Committee, if a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Credentials Committee members present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D) such action shall be considered the act of the Credentials Committee. Notice of an action by the Credentials Committee will be sent to the candidate or diplomate and the candidate or diplomate will be informed that the Board of Directors will consider the Credentials Committee decision without the presence of the candidate or diplomate or the candidate's or diplomate's attorney.
 - d. If a motion is made, seconded, and approved by majority vote of those Board of Directors present when the vote is taken (excluding any person with a conflict of interest as described below in Section XI.D) with respect to the candidate or diplomate, the Board of Directors shall send a letter to the candidate or diplomate informing the candidate or diplomate of such decision and the matter shall be concluded.
- F. An action by the ABO may include but is not limited to:
1. The diplomate's Certificate may be revoked or suspended, or the expiration date of the Certificate may be advanced;

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2. the candidate or diplomate may be publicly or privately reprimanded, be placed on probation, or have appropriate conditions imposed upon his/her Certificate, or may be required to participate in Continuing Certification, even if such diplomate was not previously subject to Continuing Certification. The diplomate may also be required to complete some or all Continuing Certification components on an expedited basis;
 3. issuance of a Certificate to the candidate may be withheld or delayed;
 4. results of prior examinations of the candidate may be invalidated;
 5. the candidate's board eligibility may be temporarily or permanently suspended;
 6. the candidate may be temporarily barred from any or all future examinations, for such period, and upon such terms and conditions, as the ABO may determine;
 7. the candidate or diplomate may be required to reimburse the ABO for its costs and legal fees in connection with the investigation, the hearing, and any appeal; or
 8. any other action deemed appropriate by the ABO.
- G. If the ABO revokes or suspends a diplomate's Certificate, places the diplomate on probation, or imposes any conditions upon the diplomate's Certificate, the Board of Directors may require the diplomate to surrender his/her Certificate and copies thereof to the ABO immediately upon notice of the determination.
- H. General Rules of Procedure
1. Matters considered by the ABO, the Board of Directors, or any ABO committee or any representative of the ABO shall not be bound by technical rules of evidence. Any of these parties may receive and consider any evidence it deems appropriate and relevant.
 2. Any written notice provided to a candidate or diplomate will be provided to the email and/or physical mailing address on file with the ABO. It is the responsibility of the candidate or diplomate to ensure a current email and physical mailing address is on file with the ABO. A candidate or diplomate will fully indemnify and hold harmless any party that provides information to the ABO upon the ABO's request.
- I. The ABO reserves the right to notify the American Board of Medical Specialties and any other interested party of any action taken by the Board of Directors. The ABO may post a summary of the action on its web site and/or publish a summary in its newsletter, or otherwise disclose the decision as it sees fit.

XI. Compliance and Awareness

- A. Candidates must comply fully with all Rules and Regulations of the ABO, as amended, during the entire time the individual is a candidate.
- B. Diplomates must comply fully with all Rules and Regulations of the ABO, as amended, for as long as the individual retains a Certificate.
- C. A candidate or diplomate will fully indemnify and hold harmless any party that provides information to the Board upon Board's request.
- D. The Board maintains a conflict of interest policy that applies to the Directors, Examiners, Volunteers, and staff. Board Directors, whether or not a member of the Credentials Committee, will recuse themselves from discussing or voting on an issue involving a diplomate with whom they have a relationship that may compromise their impartiality.