

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 29, 2023

SUBJECT: **Timeline for Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) phase out of ACOE Accreditation of Optometric Technician Programs**

TO: Deans and Presidents of Schools and Colleges of Optometry; Directors of Optometric Residencies; Supervisors of Optometric Residencies; Directors of Optometric Technician Programs; Commission on Paraoptometric Certification; Manager of Paraoptometric Certification Programs; ACOE Consultants; AOA Board of Trustees, Executive Director, Management Support Team, and General Council; Executive Committees and Directors of ARBO, AAO, NOA, NBEO, and OEBC; AOSA Executive Director and AOSA Trustees; ASCO Executive Director; Executive Directors and Board Members of State Boards; Presidents and Executive Directors of State Associations; Director of the VA Optometry Service; Military and Public Health Optometric Service Chiefs

FROM: G. Timothy Petito, O.D., ACOE Chair

DIST: ACOE, Ms. Puljak, Ms. Wirth, Ms. Mohr, Ms. Martin, Ms. Anderson

The purpose of this memorandum is to communicate the ACOE's anticipated timeline for the phase out of its accreditation of optometric technician programs. The timeline assumes the phase out of the ACOE's accreditation of optometric technician programs to be effective **June 1, 2025**.

During the ACOE's Fall Meeting, held October 14-16, 2022, the Council reviewed the comments and feedback received in response to the ACOE's July 22, 2022 call for comments regarding a proposal to phase out the accreditation process for optometric technician programs. Upon review of the comments received and following Council deliberation, the Council voted to proceed with the phase out of its accreditation of optometric technician programs and charged the Planning Committee of the ACOE with developing an implementation plan.

The results of this decision were communicated to the communities of interest in a memorandum distributed November 4, 2022. In that memorandum, the ACOE committed to developing and communicating a timeline associated with the phase out. In its Winter meeting, February 24-26, 2023, the Council accepted the plan proposed by the ACOE Planning Committee.

The ACOE anticipates the phase out of its accreditation of optometric technician programs to be effective **June 1, 2025** to allow students enrolled during the 2024-2025 academic year to complete an accredited program. In addition, the timeline includes additional opportunities for stakeholders to forward additional information that might result in Council's reconsideration of its phase out decision.

A summary version of key steps in the timeline is provided in the following table.

Timing	Action
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOE willing to reconsider phase out at its Annual Meeting should new and compelling information be provided
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACOE willing to reconsider phase out at its Fall Meeting should new and compelling information be provided • Invoices sent to accredited programs to cover 2024 annual fees
January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated ACOE Policy and Procedure Manual published - updated to remove requirement to begin Comprehensive Standards Review process for optometric technician program Standards in January 2024 • AOA Board of Trustees vote to approve changes to AOA Bylaws defining the scope of the ACOE's accreditation activities and changes to Council membership (as applicable)
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOA House of Delegates vote to approve changes to AOA Bylaws defining the scope of the ACOE's accreditation activities and changes to Council membership (as applicable)
July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited technician programs formally notified of effective date of phase out and that that 2025 annual fees are waived • Notification includes that requirement for 2024 annual report submission waived
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited technician programs are not invoiced for 2025 annual fees
June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective date of phase out (June 1, 2025) • AOA Bylaw changes effective (June 1, 2025) • Updated ACOE Policy and Procedure Manual published - updated to remove content associated with optometric technician program accreditation • As applicable AOA Board of Trustees appointment/reappointment of ACOE members includes approved changes to Council membership

The ACOE appreciates the work of the Planning Committee, chaired by Julie DeKinder, O.D., ACOE Vice Chair, Director of Academic Programs, Director of Residency Programs, and Chief of Contact Lens Services at the University of Missouri-St. Louis College of Optometry, with the following members:

- Susan Abbe, Ph.D., R.N., ACOE public member from Durham, Connecticut;
- Mark T. Evelyn, J.D., Ph.D., ACOE public member, Chair of the Department of Applied Health Sciences at Wayne State University; and
- Kimberly Lambreghts, R.N., O.D., Associate Dean for Professional Studies at University of Houston College of Optometry; and
- Katherine K. Weise, O.D., M.B.A., ACOE senior consultant, Director of Pediatric/Binocular Vision Optometry Services, Supervisor for the Pediatric Optometry Residency and a Professor at University of Alabama Birmingham School of Optometry;

As chair of the ACOE, I served as an ex-officio member of the Committee and had the privilege of participating in the Committee review and discussions.

The Council additionally thanks the individuals and organizations that responded to the call for comments and appreciates the community's support of the ACOE's mission which includes serving the public and the profession of optometry by establishing, maintaining, and applying standards to ensure the academic quality and continuous improvement of optometric education.

More information regarding the ACOE and optometric technician accreditation is available on the ACOE's website—www.theacoe.org. Input is always welcome; feel free to submit comments to accredit@theacoe.org.