

21 NCAC 42B .0302 CONTINUING EDUCATION

(a) Each optometrist holding a certificate of registration shall take annual courses of study approved by the Board as related to and essential to the practice of optometry as defined in G.S. 90-114. The Board shall approve courses whose content and quality of presentation are reasonably assured to the end that the licensee's abilities to meet the public demand of acceptable standards of care are enhanced and that currency of knowledge is insured.

(b) Each licensee shall determine if a course has been approved by the Board prior to the taking of the course and submitting it for credit.

(c) No course or course offering shall be considered for approval unless the vendor or sponsor has submitted to the Board no later than 30 days prior to the offering of the course information deemed sufficient by the Board as to the course title, course format, course content and learning purpose, lecturers including curriculum vitae, dates courses are offered, city and state where offered, and the name, address, and telephone number of the vendor or sponsor and the contact person(s) to whom inquiries can be made.

(d) Those courses that are approved, including the type and number of hours of credit, shall be entered by the Board's staff into the Board's central data base and the vendor or sponsor notified. Information concerning those courses that have been approved shall be made available to any licensee making inquiry concerning course approval.

(e) The Board shall maintain continuing education data on-line in its central data base for a minimum period of five years preceding the next annual license renewal date. A yearly listing of credits shall be furnished each licensee at the time of license renewal. Additional reports shall be available on request and with payment of a transcript fee of five dollars (\$5.00). Telephone inquiries as to current status of continuing education hours may be made during normal business hours.

(f) Notification of the number of hours required by the Board for license renewal shall be given to each licensee at the time the licensee receives notice of annual license renewal. Such notice shall state the number of hours of approved continuing education required in the following year in order to renew a license for the second following year. The number of required continuing education hours is 25 hours.

(g) In any calendar year no less than 12 hours of the continuing education requirement must be in courses focused on current practices and advancements in the fields of ocular and general pharmacology, diagnosis and therapeutics, or advanced clinical procedures, said hours to be deemed "certified" credit hours by the Board. Courses certified to meet this special requirement shall be of sufficient length and depth to address the subject matter in the course description(s) and taught by individuals who have training and experience in the area taught.

(h) Courses of self-study by vendors meeting the standards and criteria set by the Council on Optometric Postgraduate Education (COPE) or the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), said course(s) meant to be taken by individuals through journal articles or over the internet where organized material is presented and written evaluations are made prior to or after completing the course(s) are eligible for approval provided the vendor or sponsor has submitted the course or courses for approval as described in this Rule prior to its being offered to the licensee. However, no licensee shall receive credit for more than six hours of educational credit by this means in any calendar year.

(i) Courses that are classified as practice administration shall be accepted by the Board for credit provided that no more than four hours of the total number of continuing education hours required shall be accepted within one calendar year for the purpose of credit for any licensee.

(j) All courses accepted for credit must be taken within the calendar year for which the credit is applied; provided, however, that any course dependent upon an examination for successful completion may be certified to the Board following examination even if the examination or the results thereof are not available until the next calendar year.

(k) Attendance at any course or courses approved by the Board shall be for the requisite period. The vendor or sponsor of the course shall assure compliance with this requirement and shall so certify to the Board no later than 30 days following the courses being offered. Documentation of attendance may be transmitted:

- (1) By the vendor or sponsor of the education provided the documentation contains the following information:
 - (A) Course title and classification verification;
 - (B) Vendor or sponsor identification;
 - (C) Name of and license number of North Carolina licensee; and
 - (D) Vendor or sponsor's attestation or verification of attendance.
- (2) By any licensee directly to the Board provided that the attendance is documented by the vendor or sponsor of the education, on a form given the licensee attending the course(s) attesting to their attendance, and the original form, not a photocopy or facsimile, is submitted.

(l) Electronic transfer of attendance records in a data base format compatible to the Board's data management system is acceptable; provided, however, the Board may at any time within three years of the date of transfer call for a hard copy verification if in its opinion such verification is necessary.

*History Note: Authority G.S. 12-3.1; 90-117.5; 90-123.1;
Eff. February 1, 1976;
Readopted Eff. May 30, 1978;
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Pursuant to G.S. 150B-21.3A, rule is necessary without substantive public interest Eff. May 23, 2015.*