

BOARD FOR HEARING AID SPECIALISTS AND OPTICIANS

APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

The Board for Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians Ad Hoc Committee on Optician Apprenticeships met on Thursday, October 9, 2014, at the Offices of the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, 9960 Mayland Drive, 2nd Floor, Training Room 1, Richmond, Virginia. The following board members were present:

Robert E. Flippin, Chair
Deborah Bauer-Robertson
Jon D. Bright
Judith M. Canty
Bonnie Mayhew

DPOR staff present for all or part of the meeting included:

Demetrios Melis, Executive Director
Stephen Kirschner, Regulatory Operations Administrator
Tamika Rodriguez, Licensing Operations Administrator
Cathy Clark, Administrative Assistant

Representative from the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry present for the meeting:

Beverley Donati, Apprenticeship Division Director

Representative from the Optician Association of Virginia present for the meeting:

Kristi F. Green, President,
Optician Association of Virginia

Mr. Flippin called the committee meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

Call to Order

Mr. Flippin opened the discussion by presenting the Committee with a list of concerns, including:

Statement of Concerns

1. The length of the apprenticeship program.
2. In some areas, apprentices are given work experience credit and are completing apprenticeships in less than two years, with a lack of documentation.
3. Out-of-date textbooks having been used in some community colleges. The Board approved NAO texts should be the only texts being used.
4. Home study
5. Minimum competency tests during apprenticeship.

- a. Interim test between years one and two.
6. Task requirements for apprentices are out-dated.

Discussions

Ms. Bauer-Robertson suggested pre-testing before entry into the Apprenticeship Program. Ms. Green agreed that a pre-test would be a good tool for assessing incoming apprentices and evaluating program effectiveness.

Pre-testing and Post-testing

Mr. Flippin suggested that a post-test (using a NCSORB model) should be administered prior to taking the state exam.

Mr. Bright stated that the state exam should be the final assessment of competency; with a possible mid-term test at the end of the first apprenticeship year.

Ms. Donati stated that an effort should be made to identify the sponsors of apprentices who do not pass the state exam in an effort to assess the consistency and adequacy of training.

Identifying Sponsors whose Apprentices Do Not Pass the Exam

The Committee discussed the length of the Apprenticeship program and consideration of changing it from a 3-year (6000 hr) program to a 2-year (4000 hr) program.

Length of Apprenticeship Program

The Committee discussed apprenticeship training.

Related Instruction

- Ms. Donati stated that there is a lack of consistency in training across the state of Virginia.
- Mr. Flippin indicated that most apprentices are not getting the required laboratory time and that laboratory equipment has changed over time. He suggested capturing the laboratory processes on video for training purposes.
- Mr. Bright suggested that shortening the length of the apprenticeship program may negatively impact the Virginia Community College System's revenue.
- Ms. Donati indicated that the Apprenticeship Council is not funded by the federal government and that the Department of Labor and Industry is a general fund agency.
- It was agreed by the Committee that parties involved should work toward establishing a 1 or 2 book program that is consistent across the state.
- Ms. Donati suggested additional members to be included in future Committee meetings: Randall Stamper and Elizabeth Moran, with

VCCS.

- Mr. Flippin stated that related instruction must be taught by licensed opticians, optometrists, or ophthalmologists.
- Ms. Green addressed the group about class-sharing that has been instituted by some Virginia Community Colleges (e.g., NOVA) and regional technical centers to provide related instruction in distance learning settings.
- Ms. Donati stated that the Apprenticeship Council acts as an advisor for related instruction.
- Ms. Green expressed concern about related instruction provided through the NAO and whether or not its testing is proctored.

Mr. Melis queried the Committee members on the advantage of administering a test during the apprenticeship program.

**Executive
Director's
Questions**

Mr. Flippin replied that a test administered at the mid-point of the program would be used to measure the apprentice's progress.

Mr. Melis asked Ms. Donati to address the issue of sponsors who may sign off on an apprentice's completion document when the training has not been completed, specifically, what action is taken if a sponsor is found to be not competent or actions are improper.

Ms. Donati indicated that most of the time the sponsor will voluntarily deregister. If the sponsor does not voluntarily deregister, there is a process through the federal regulations (29CFR29) to place the sponsor on probation, after which, if deregistration is required, it is handled through United States Department of Labor solicitors general.

Ms. Donati indicated that she wishes to be provided with the names of the last groups of apprenticeship exam candidates who have failed the exam, so that the sponsors and any patterns of failure can be established. If patterns of failure can be identified, the related sponsors' problems can be addressed.

Mr. Melis expressed a concern that there is no definitive recourse for eliminating sponsors who are not qualified and/or are signing off on apprenticeship completion without providing adequate training.

The Committee discussed enforcing the application procedure that all exam requirements must be complete, including the apprenticeship completion document, before the candidate may sit for the exam. In the past, apprentices who were 'on-track' to complete the apprenticeship were allowed to take the exam, but were required to submit apprenticeship completion document before license could be approved and issued. This practice has been eliminated.

**All
Apprenticeship
Requirements
Must Be Met**

The Committee discussed ways in which the number of apprenticeship hours could be reduced from 6000 to 4000 hours if the program were shortened to a two-year program.

**Reducing the
Apprenticeship
Hours
Requirement**

Mr. Flippin suggested incorporating a video component to the related instruction curriculum.

Ms. Green asked that the Board address the issue of who can physically take part in the apprenticeship program. The Committee agreed that accessibility is an ADA issue.

Accessibility

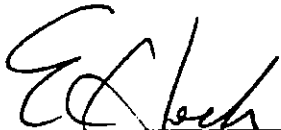
The next Committee meeting date was not determined. Date for next meeting will be discussed at the December 10, 2014 meeting of the full Board.

Next Meeting

Committee members were asked to review the Standards of Apprenticeship (tasks, work processes) and make recommendations at the next committee meeting to be provided to DOLI.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Flippin adjourned the committee meeting at 3:38 PM.

Adjourn



Eric B. Hecker, PhD, Chair



Jay W. DeBoer, Secretary