



NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY®

ADVANCING THE ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE®

March 9, 2021

Mr. Alex Bennett
President, American Optometric Student Association
243 N. Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Mr. Bennett and Dr. Cherian,

The Board of Directors of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry is in receipt of your February 23, 2021 letter and has given it the due consideration it deserves. We appreciate honest feedback and embrace the need for continuous improvement. Your letter references three areas in need of improvement which we will attempt to address: proactive scheduling changes, enhanced communication, and financial transparency.

Regarding our approach to scheduling changes, as referenced on our website, dates are indeed subject to change at NBEO's discretion. However, the NBEO endeavors to provide a stable and reliable schedule for examinations, and any decisions to change dates are done thoughtfully, and only if required or for the benefit of candidates. We strive to be proactive in communicating such changes and regret that our recent efforts to communicate were poorly received. We will do our best to communicate any future changes in a more timely manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the NBEO. NBEO has implemented multiple organizational measures to ensure the availability of our examinations while maintaining the integrity essential to our mission. We worked closely with Pearson VUE to increase examination windows, added additional examination opportunities, implemented a multitude of safety measures to keep candidates safe in the National Center of Clinical Testing in Optometry, and formed a task force in conjunction with the Association of Regulatory Boards in Optometry to research and investigate alternative testing methods during the pandemic. Recommendations from the task force were thoroughly evaluated, including the impact each would have on candidate fees. We sincerely appreciate having a recent AOSA President participate on this task force and have included the task force report with this letter if you have not already received it.



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The NBEO Board of Directors takes its commitment to fiscal responsibility most seriously. Our Board of Directors carefully contemplates matters of examination fees before any decision is determined. The NBEO had previously elected not to increase examination fees for a span of 10 years but this practice became unsustainable. Nevertheless, the NBEO examination series has intentionally been maintained below that of other national licensing examinations in the health professions. NBEO acknowledges the concern over student debt and increased tuition costs. We remain committed to the careful evaluation of decisions related to examination fees with the due diligence and financial stewardship they deserve.

The NBEO wants to continue to constructively engage the AOSA as a respected stakeholder in the optometric examination process. Over the last year, the NBEO has included the AOSA as part of our communication protocol. Further, the AOSA has been and will continue to be an invited guest to the NBEO annual meeting to provide a platform for the AOSA to discuss its priorities and concerns directly with the NBEO board of directors. The NBEO would like to ensure that we have an effective channel for timely and ongoing interactive dialogue with the AOSA through our AOSA liaison and proposes that we predetermine a regular communications schedule.

NBEO looks forward to ongoing communications with AOSA and efforts to collectively improve our relationship.

Sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John R. Sicotte".

John R. Sicotte
Interim President
National Board of Examiners in Optometry