



# AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

## **AOA Continuing Education Hours Program**

### **Background/Introduction**

This document serves as a guide to outline the process and use of continuing education (CE) and professional development courses that meet the AOA standard of quality and excellence. The courses that meet this distinction will have the approval of the AOA to be used during and for AOA education and professional development events and through AOA affiliate venues.

The AOA has a reputation for providing access to resources that support the growth and development of doctors' skills and knowledge for the betterment of the practice of optometry. This discerning approach to CE and professional development is essential for the growth of the profession. The purpose of AOA-approved courses is to enhance the training and educational materials that are available to doctors of optometry; it is intended to allow for nontraditional learning to qualify for CE and professional development. While the AOA Education Center Committee (ECC) recognizes the potential for bias in the delivery of information pertaining to ophthalmic products, devices, instruments, biological properties and or pharmaceuticals, it also realizes the necessity of proper training on these new materials particularly when it pertains to cutting-edge treatments for which no direct counterpart/competitor exists. As such, the ECC will consider and potentially grant recognition of CE hours for information delivered by reputable speakers even if backed by industry, all to keep attendees as up to date as possible in what has become a rapidly evolving landscape where change occurs quickly.

The decision to offer AOA CE Hours came after discussions with state leaders, notable and respected speakers as well as other associations. The need for more diverse learning environments and education techniques has been the catalyst behind this movement. AOA CE Hours are not intended to be a revenue generator for the AOA.

### **Mission**

AOA CE Hours serve to enhance the type of CE and professional development content that can be provided related to topics that don't typically fit into standard, traditional third-party requirements. This evolution allows for the AOA to expand education offerings and deliver clinical, business and communication-related topics that advance the practice of contemporary optometry. By offering CE hours, the AOA expands the concept of what CE is while still maintaining high standards for education and delivering innovative and unique content not found in other meetings and offerings. The AOA will continue to grow and adapt its education offerings so that doctors can deliver eye health and vision care to the country.

### **Course Submission and Evaluation**

The ECC launches a *Call for Courses* annually to encourage subject-matter experts to submit courses for review for possible use for an AOA education outlet or event. Additionally, the same ECC may request a

course be submitted for review if it determines there is a lack of material in any particular area. The ECC is comprised of doctors, educators, state affiliates and paraoptometricians who represent a population of established professionals in the optometric community and know the importance of accurate and timely education resources.

To satisfy the *Call for Courses* requirements and be considered for review by the ECC, the following submission requirements must be met:

- Provide a 1.5- to 2-page course outline per hour of content
- Provide a course description and course objectives
- Provide a speaker curriculum vitae
- Provide a disclosure statement for the speaker(s)
- Provide course length—must fulfill either a one-hour or two-hour increment

When the *Call for Courses* closes, the ECC utilizes a multi-step course evaluation process to determine which courses will be selected for use by the AOA for dissemination via its various education outlets. This course review process entails a course being evaluated by multiple members of the committee, a scoring system that allows for the committee members to provide analytical feedback, small-group review discussion to conduct course critiques, and then a full-group review of the suggested approved courses before a course is granted final approval. All course speakers will remain anonymous during this review process.

### **Course Content Categories & Subcategories**

At the completion of the multi-step course review process, the ECC will assign the course topic designation and subcategory. There are three topics a course may fall under: Clinical Education, General Optometry or Professional Development. The Clinical Education topic possesses the following subcategories: Surgical Procedures, Laser Procedures, Injections. The General Optometry topic possesses the following subcategories: Anterior Segment, Posterior Segment, Systemic Disease, Glaucoma, Pharmacology, Contact Lenses, Refractive, Binocular Vision/Vision Rehab.

### **Terms of Approval and Use**

Due to the nature of contemporary medicine and the onset of new research and development in the field, course approvals will be given on a sliding scale ranging from one to three years. In the instance of a one-year approval, the ECC will allow for speakers to make updates to their content in order to seek a renewed approval once a course approval expires.

By recognizing that education and learning occur in various spaces, AOA-approved learning experiences will be able to be offered in a variety of formats including but not limited to panel discussions, problem-based learning scenarios, hands-on and experiential opportunities, small-group discussions and self-paced learning in either a face-to-face or virtual setting.

Course approval relates to the course, its contents and the speaker(s) submitted through the *Call for Courses* process. The approval is nullified if the course is presented by a speaker who was not listed on the original course submission. Replacement of an approved speaker will require the course be resubmitted for reapproval.

Approvals come with a caveat that the hours will be eligible for AOA approval only if the course is used through an AOA or AOA affiliate venue.

### **AOA Course Catalog**

Speakers will be able to give consent to allow their approved AOA course to be listed in the AOA Course Catalog available on the AOA's website. This complementary catalog will be available for AOA affiliates to use as a source for speakers and courses for their own meetings and education events. The speaker will provide consent on their speaker agreement, which serves as the issued contract used between the AOA and the speaker that outlines the use of their course and the terms around speaker conduct and professionalism.

The AOA Course Catalog will be updated regularly with courses that are available for affiliate use. The largest update will coincide with the conclusion of AOA's annual Optometry's Meeting®. Due to the nature of these updates, it is recommended that affiliates reference the online catalog prior to making course selections.

### **AOA CE Hours Activity/Event Approval**

Affiliates will be able to request approval, at no cost, and will be given an activity number to include on certificates/transcripts associated with the event in question.