

**American Academy of Optometry
Low Vision Section**

Research Low Vision Diplomate Program

CANDIDATE'S GUIDE

(Revised March 2018; Approved 11/9/2018 by the Diplomates of the Low Vision Section at the Annual meeting)

Diplomate status in the Low Vision Section of the American Academy of Optometry is recognition of academic achievement by Academy Fellows in the assessment and management of the visual abilities and rehabilitation needs of persons with impaired vision. Fellows who have expertise in low vision but who are primarily researchers are encouraged to become candidates for the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program. Candidates who are optometrists should pursue the Clinical Diplomate if their current clinical effort exceeds 30% of their workload.

Participation in the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program is expected to provide a rewarding experience and gratifying recognition of contributions to the field. Additionally, it offers opportunities to meet and collaborate with colleagues from many parts of the country and world who share mutual interests and concerns. Research Low Vision Diplomates work and practice in a wide range of settings; including optometric institutions and other universities, hospitals and rehabilitation agencies.

After successfully completing the program, Diplomates are expected to stay abreast of new developments and remain engaged in the field, including acceptance of responsibilities and leadership in lecturing, writing, and teaching within the Academy and within its Low Vision Section. Diplomates are expected to participate in Annual Academy Meetings and must renew their qualifications every five years by documenting continued activity in low vision research, professional activities, and teaching. Continued engagement with the Low Vision Section is necessary to maintain status as a Research Low Vision Diplomate and the high standard of expertise characteristic of the Academy and Low Vision Section.

Outline

- I. Requirements to Become a Candidate
- II. Requirements for Diplomate Candidates
- III. Oral Examination
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I. Requirements to Become a Candidate for Diplomate Status

There are specific eligibility requirements for Fellows who wish to become Candidates for the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program. Potential candidates should carefully review their own credentials before applying to this Diplomate Program to determine if additional experience should precede application.

Eligibility:

1. The Candidate must be a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry in good standing, with demonstrated past commitment to the Low Vision (LV) Section (i.e., attendance at LV events or LV presentations – posters or papers) within the last three years.
2. The Candidate must be sponsored by three Low Vision Diplomates (at least one of whom is a Research Diplomate) who have submitted letters of reference attesting to the Candidate's involvement in low vision research and his/her national and/or international prominence as well as worthiness to become a Research Low Vision Diplomate. In the online application for Research Low Vision Diplomate, the Candidate will indicate the three Low Vision Diplomates who will provide a letter of reference, but the candidate will be responsible for contacting these individuals to ask them to provide the letter by emailing it to the Research Diplomate Examination Committee Chair in Section V.
3. The Candidate must have a successful record of accomplishment in the field, including at least 10 papers on which the Candidate is the first or corresponding author on original research related to low vision, with at least three papers published in the past five years. The papers must be in peer-reviewed journals and preferably Pubmed-indexed; if not, article or journal must be approved by the Diplomate committee.

To be considered for candidacy, potential candidates must submit their CV, which will be evaluated along with the letters of recommendation by the Low Vision Diplomate Executive Committee and the Research Low Vision Diplomate Chair. The CV document should include specific activities relevant to research publications, funding, awards, honors, lectures and presentations, and involvement in professional organizations.

Applications are submitted online and accessed through the Academy website. Payment of an application fee of \$100.00 must be submitted once the application is approved. Once accepted as a candidate, this fee is nonrefundable.

Application Deadline: Applications can be submitted at any time.

II. Requirements for Research Low Vision Diplomate Candidates

The Executive Committee in conjunction with the Chair of the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program will evaluate the Candidate's CV, publications, and letters of recommendation. If the Candidate meets the criteria and the application is accepted, the Candidate must complete the following four requirements to achieve Research Diplomate status:

- 1) **Research Summary:** Submission of a 3-page, double-spaced, summary of research in low vision over the Candidate's career, highlighting significant findings and major contributions, including the clinical importance or relevance of their work, as well as current and planned future research endeavors.
- 2) **Interest and Motivational Summary:** Submission of a one-page, double-spaced summary to describe the Candidate's interest and motivation to become a Research Diplomate in Low Vision, as well as past involvement in the Academy Low Vision Section and plans for future contributions to the section.

3) **Review Paper:** Independently write a publishable quality, sole author, research review paper on a low vision related topic. The Low Vision Research Diplomate Chair must approve the topic prior to initiating the work. The paper will be sent to 2 Low Vision Research Diplomates for review. Candidates may be required to make revisions prior to acceptance. The Low Vision Research Diplomate Chair must approve the final version of the paper prior to scheduling the oral examination. In order to allow adequate time for review and revision, the paper must be received no later than June 1 for the candidate to be considered for oral examination at the Annual Meeting in the same year.

4) **Oral Examination:** The oral examination provides an opportunity for Candidates to more fully reveal their particular research approach and will only be offered after the Candidate successfully completes all other requirements. The oral examination will be conducted by the Research Diplomate Examination Committee and will cover aspects of the Candidate's research with emphasis on the published papers submitted. One hour is typically allotted. The candidate will be asked questions primarily related to their publications and research areas in a congenial and professional atmosphere during the Annual Meeting. The Chair will structure the interview to include questions to gain insight into strengths and weaknesses of the candidate as revealed in their written reports. Questions demanding knowledge of details or computational skills will be kept to a minimum. The oral examination will stress conceptual grasps of topical areas rather than knowledge of details or skills in manipulating data. In developing questions, the Chair will coordinate a review of comments from the candidate's research discussions or publications. Candidates who provide clinical care will be asked additional questions pertinent to low vision clinical care, which may include calculations. The Research Diplomate Committee chair will notify the candidate and the Diplomate Chair as to whether the candidate successfully completed the exam or if additional study is needed prior to a retest at a subsequent meeting. If a retest is needed, the candidate will be provided written feedback. A new committee will be formed which includes 1 member from the original committee.

Candidacy period: A Candidate is expected to complete all requirements by the third consecutive Academy meeting following acceptance as a Candidate. Candidates who have not completed requirements for Diplomate status within the requisite three- year period can apply for a one-year extension by submitting an updated CV and research summary. There will be a fee equal to that of new applicants to the Diplomate Program payable to the American Academy of Optometry. If requirements are not completed by the end of that one-year extension, individuals must re-apply and start the Diplomate process again from the beginning.

Attendance at low vision lectures, workshops, paper and poster sessions, symposia, and section meetings at the Annual Academy meeting during the candidacy period is encouraged.

Questions and Concerns: Questions concerning the submission and review of Written Summaries, the Review Paper or Oral Exam should be directed to the Chairperson, Research Diplomate Examination Committee.

Awarding of Research Diplomate in Low Vision: The final recommendation regarding an applicant's completion or non-completion of the Research Diplomate will be made by the Diplomate Executive Committee. Upon successful completion of the oral examination, candidates are officially nominated for Diplomate status and must be approved by a majority of the Low Vision Section Diplomates attending the Low Vision Diplomate Meeting during the

annual meeting of the American Academy of Optometry. Names of approved nominees are forwarded to the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Optometry. Approved nominees are expected to attend the Annual Banquet at which they are officially introduced as new Research Low Vision Diplomates.

Renewal of Research Diplomat Status: Diplomates are expected to document active and current involvement in low vision. Accordingly, Research Diplomates are expected to renew their status every five years according to specific criteria assigning points for research and other activities. They need to generate 25 points every five years, with a minimum of eight points in any three of those years. Information on renewals can be found on the AAO website

IV. Checklists

Initial requirements to become a Diplomat candidate:

- Complete online application, including the submission of a CV:
<https://diplomat.aaopt.org/Fellow>
- Request letters of recommendation from three Low Vision Diplomates, of which at least one is a Research Low Vision Diplomat
- Upload a list of at least 10 low vision research paper publications(at least 3 of which were published in the last 5 years) as first or corresponding author in the online application

After acceptance as a Diplomat candidate:

- Submit the Summary of Research document in the online application
- Submit a document with a brief summary of their interest to become a Low Vision Research Diplomat in the online application
- Submit a research review paper on a low vision topic written independently while a Candidate. The topic must be pre-approved by the Low Vision Research Diplomat Committee.
- Schedule and complete the oral examination at the annual Academy Meeting