

PHEV - BECOME A DIPLOMATE

(revised November 2011)

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FLOW CHART FOR DIPLOMATE PROCESS

TIMELINE FOR DIPLOMATE APPLICANTS

Application (prior to first year of Diplomate program)	
Potential applicant(s) should notify Diplomate Chair of their intention to apply. Notifications received after this date are not guaranteed consideration for acceptance to sit for the written exam this year.	On or before JUNE 1
Diplomate Chair sends e-letter (see “PHEV letter to Diplomate Applicant”) to potential applicant outlining what is required for a successful application.	On or before June 15
Applicant sends Diplomate Chair their completed application	On or before July 1
Diplomate Chair reviews the application. If the application is complete (including declaration of for Public Health or Environmental Vision tract), the Diplomate Chair distributes it to the Diplomate Committee. If the application is not complete, the Diplomate Chair communicates deficiencies to the potential applicant with advice to 1) withdraw their application for the present, or 2) revise the application. The Diplomate Chair will set appropriate deadline for accepting revisions.	On or before July 15
Diplomate Committee members notify the Diplomate Chair of their recommendation to accept or reject the application. The Diplomate Chair makes a final decision on the application status and notifies the applicant.	On or before August 1
The successful applicant(s) send(s) their “Letter of Intent”, CV, the Section’s “Application for Diplomate” form, and a check for \$100.00 (USD) to the Academy office. An unsuccessful application receives appropriate feedback from the Diplomate Chair. The successful applicant has five years from the Annual Meeting of the year the application fee is paid to complete the Diplomate.	On or before August 15
Alternately, any fellow who signs up for the PHEV Prep Course may elect to sit for the written exam, and the \$100.00 “Application for Diplomate fee will be waived. If an application, CV and letter of intent is deemed acceptable by the diplomate chair, and the diplomate committee at the Annual Meeting, and there is a successful passing score on the written exam, the candidate MAY be allowed to sit for the oral interview. This alternate pathway will be allowed at the discretion of the diplomate chair and if there is availability in the diplomate committee	At the Annual Meeting

<p>schedule at the annual meeting. It is highly recommended that anyone sitting for the prep course submit a letter of intent, application and CV prior to the Annual Meeting. The earlier that this information is provided, the more likely the Diplomate Committee will be able to accommodate an applicant and provide feedback on the applicant's prospects in the Diplomate process.</p>	
Applicant status (first year)	
Sit for written exam	At Annual Meeting
If successful on the written exam, sit for oral interview. If successful, applicant becomes a Candidate	At Annual Meeting
Candidacy (second year or later)	
Candidate proposes three potential projects for the Diplomate Committee.	On or before January 15
DC reviews the project proposals. If in acceptable form, the DC sends them to the Diplomate Committee for review. If not, the DC communicates to the applicant what revisions are necessary.	On or before January 30
The Diplomate Committee reviews the proposals and reports their preferences to the DC who finalizes which proposal to be the Candidate's project and communicates that to the Candidate. Candidate is encouraged to work with the DC to set a schedule where outline, reference list, and rough drafts are submitted prior to the first completed draft. The DC will ask a Diplomate Committee member to act as a mentor to review the project's development through this period.	On or before February 20 March 1-June 30
Candidate submits completed project first draft to DC.	On or before July 15
DC sends project first draft to the Diplomate Committee for review. Committee members act as journal referees and communicate to the DC: accept, revision needed or reject. Most will be classified as revision needed. (If accepted, Candidate done until oral defense at the Annual Meeting. If rejected, Candidate will need to start the project phase over again by proposing new projects on the same previous timeline.)	On or before August 5
DC sends project back to Candidate with Diplomate Committee comments for revision if needed.	On or before August 10
Candidate revises project and resubmits to DC.	On or before September 10
DC circulates final project to Diplomate Committee. Committee makes final decision to accept or reject. If accepted, Committee members are encouraged to include questions for the Candidate that might be asked at the oral defense. If rejected, DC will assess if Candidate should 1) continue in the program with current project or another project or 2) discontinue their candidacy.	On or before October 1 If project accepted, Candidate sits for oral defense at the Annual Meeting
Successful defense of the project!	Diplomate status conferred at President's Banquet

I. INTRODUCTION

Who are Diplomates in Public Health and Environmental Vision?

Diplomate, from the root word diploma, is the title and certification given a Fellow of the Academy who has achieved advanced expertise, understanding, and education in public health optometry and environmental vision by completing the Diplomate Program.

Diplomates in the Section are optometrists, public health professionals, and vision scientists from a variety of backgrounds including private practice, government and military service, academic institutions, private sector organizations, research settings, and not for profit agencies.

What is Public Health Optometry? What is Environmental Vision?

As a specialty, Public Health Optometry includes optometrists who recognize and actively participate in management of conditions and systems from a population perspective. Specialists in Environmental Vision educate and facilitate people whose vision needs are unique to their occupation or recreation. Public Health Optometrists may treat an outbreak of infectious eye disease. Public Health and Environmental Vision specialists may influence access of care, health care policy and finances for groups. It is this emphasis on populations that distinguishes the Public Health and Environmental Vision Section.

Public Health and Environmental Vision is the application of public health and optometric principles to improve the eye health and vision of the population.

Throughout the foreseeable future, the organization, administration and delivery of health care services will continue to change in a rapid and sometimes unpredictable manner. Our profession needs expertise, understanding and education in the area of health care policy and administration, and environmental vision. We need to develop and recognize leaders of our profession who exercise the knowledge and maintain an active involvement in public health.

Fellows of the American Academy of Optometry may become Diplomates of the Section on Public Health when they have demonstrated the required level of knowledge and expertise in public health optometry. The application of public health knowledge involves an understanding of major societal issues, such as workforce and finance, that effect the delivery of health services to different groups or populations.

This guide describes the requirements and procedures for becoming a Diplomate of the Section on Public Health.

II. ELIGIBILITY

Applicants to the Diplomate Program will consist of Fellows of the Academy who:

1. Are in good standing with the Academy
2. Have shown a working interest in this optometric specialty
3. Have demonstrated a high level of knowledge of public health optometry and/or environmental optometry.

Recognition as a Diplomate in Public Health and Environmental Vision will be awarded to those who successfully demonstrate knowledge, skills and participation in public health or community optometry activities in their work and should be reflected on their application, curriculum vitae, letter of intent, written examination (given at the Academy's annual meeting), oral interview (given at the Academy's annual meeting), scholarly paper on a topic approved by the Section's Diplomate Committee, and oral defense of the paper at the annual Academy meeting.

III. APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY

The prospective applicant should notify the Diplomate Chair of his/her intention to apply for the Diplomate Program by **June 1** in the year in which the written examination is planned to be taken. The Diplomate Chair will respond to this notification by informing the applicant of the steps required for successful application. By July 1 the applicant must submit to the Diplomate Chair a completed application to include a **current Curriculum Vitae and a letter of interest**. The letter of interest should explain the applicant's interest and involvement in public health and/or environmental optometry. Applicants should apply with a stated emphasis in either Public Health Optometry or Environmental Vision. While the section expects candidates to demonstrate superior knowledge in both areas for all the examinations, more expertise and knowledge will be expected based on the emphasis selected by the candidates. For example, candidates with an emphasis in Public Health Optometry will be expected to discuss the fine points of current health care policy and health care economics. Candidates with an emphasis in Environmental Vision will be expected to demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of environmental vision concepts and the impact of the environment on the eye and vision such as ergonomics, radiation and lighting including lasers, vision requirements, and sport and safety eye standards.

The Diplomate Chair reviews the application, and, if complete, will forward the CV and Letter of Intent to the Diplomate committee for review. Individual Diplomate Committee members will identify the strengths and/or weaknesses of the application and inform the Diplomate Chair of his/her recommendation for approval. On or before

August 1, the Diplomate Chair makes a final decision on the application status and notifies the applicant. Before August 15 the successful applicant must then send his/her CV, letter of interest, and completed Application for Diplomate form to the AAO office along with a check for \$100.00 (USD). The successful applicant has five years from the Annual Meeting of the year the application fee was paid to complete the Diplomate process.

An unsuccessful applicant receives appropriate feedback from the Diplomate Chair along with suggestions to strengthen his/her application for future consideration. This applicant is then encouraged to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the Diplomate Chair and/or other section executive committee members at the Annual Meeting to discuss his/her application shortcomings.

Note for Fellows from outside the United States: the current Diplomate curriculum is designed for United States optometrists or health care professionals. Noting the Section's interest in international optometry, and, that human conditions do not respect political borders, the Section will, at its discretion, edit certain knowledge areas that are unique to the United States in order to de-emphasize United States health care policy, law, or finances for a non U.S. applicant. All Candidates will be expected to meet basic science, clinical science, and public health requirements applicable across borders. The applicant from outside the United States needs to make a direct request for an International Tract to the Chair of the Diplomate Program in his/her letter of intent.

The applicant's **letter of interest** should include why she/he wants to be a Diplomate, how she/he will benefit the section, or what her/his current goals are related to Public Health and/or Environmental Vision activities.

Additionally, the letter of interest should include a discussion and/or description of the applicant's previous Public Health and/or Environmental Vision activities. Examples of these activities are:

1. Active involvement in government or public health services, voluntary health care programs or organization, the development of local, state or national public health policy, and/or environmental/occupational vision activities;
2. Published papers, reports and/or other documents on public health, environmental vision, or related topics;
3. Teaching appropriate courses in recognized post-graduate programs of the Academy and/or other professional associations;
4. Presentations on pertinent topics to professional and/or civic groups;
5. Faculty appointment with the responsibility for teaching public health and/or environmental vision related courses and/or topics;
6. Active participation in professional and/or community-based organizations concerned and/or involved with public health or environmental vision;
7. Advanced education and training in public health or environmental vision; and,
8. Documentation of other types of direct experience and expertise in public or environmental vision.

The Diplomate Committee will review the applicant's letter of interest, Curriculum Vitae and any other information submitted as evidence or documentation of the applicant's knowledge and expertise in the area of public health optometry and environmental vision. When the decision regarding acceptance into the Diplomate Program is made by the Committee, the Chair of the Diplomate Program will notify the applicant of the decision and provide instructions regarding the next step of the process.

IV. DIPLOMATE EXAMINATION

Upon the approval of the Diplomate Committee, the applicant becomes eligible to take the **written and oral Diplomate examinations** at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the American Academy of Optometry. The written and oral examinations are prepared and administered by the members of the Diplomate Committee. The material covered in the written examination is provided in the practice profile and [reading list](#). An interview with the Diplomate Committee is part of the oral examination. The oral examination and interview provide the Committee with the opportunity to review the applicant's written examination results and further evaluate the applicant's knowledge and expertise in public health or environmental optometry.

The written examination must be taken and passed prior to taking the oral examination. Upon passing the written examination, the applicant will sit for the oral examination. The following topics may be covered on either or both the written and oral examinations:

1. Public health and optometry- philosophy, history, scope
2. Epidemiology- basic science (measures of distribution and determinants of disease) and clinical science (distribution of eye conditions in human populations, associations, and implications of causation)
3. Applications of epidemiology and biostatistics- experimental designs (validity and generalizability), interpretation of statistical tests, causation, vision screening, and research ethics
4. Health care policy- legal basis for health care services and providers, regulation of health care provision, patient rights and protections, major federal statutes on health care, access to care
5. Organization of health care and systems- organization of health care providers (primary, secondary, tertiary), public health departments, types of practice

6. Principles of prevention, health care education, dissemination of health care resources and promotion through U.S. federal and other agencies- research (NIH), prevention (CDC), regulation (FDA), financing (CMM), others (VA, IHS, OSHA, Military, etc), private organizations (Prevent Blindness), associations (AOA, AAO, ANSI, APHA, WHO), institutions, and foundations
7. Health economics including reimbursement mechanisms- services (patient-employer or subsidizer third party-provider), types of financing (fee for service, capitation), entities (hospitals, clinics, practices), materials (equipment, medicine, glasses, contact lenses)
8. Health care need and provision- supply and demand of health care workers, barriers to care: cultural, economic, geographic, etc.
9. Quality Assurance- health care services, medical equipment, financing, agencies involved (state board, JCAHO, CMM, provider panels, department of health, ARBO, COPE, NBEO)
10. Public health ethics- ethical dilemma, processes for ethical decision making, moral standards versus ethics, law versus ethics, application of ethics to public health optometry, influence of religion or spirituality on health and health care
11. Challenges to the provision of health care in developing countries
12. Occupational and environmental hazards to the eye and adnexa (e.g. electromagnetic radiation, dust, flying particles, blunt trauma, chemicals) and factors related to the prevention of damage from those hazards
13. Lighting requirements and visual task design for efficient visual functioning along with factors related to discomfort and disability glare
14. Color discrimination abilities of those with normal and defective color vision to include factors related to color vision standards in industry, law enforcement, aviation and driving (See also "Practice Profile" under "Becoming a Diplomate" under "Sections" and "Public Health & Environmental Vision.")

Relatively few applicants pass both the written and oral examinations the first time. This does not reflect poorly on the applicant, but does reflect the high expectation that the Section has for Diplomates in Public Health and Environmental Vision. If the applicant does not pass either the written or oral examination, the respective examination(s) can be retaken the following year at the next Academy meeting.

V. ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Once the written and oral examinations have been completed and passed, the applicant is advanced to candidacy status. At this point, the candidate is asked to prepare an **in-depth paper** on a topic to be agreed upon by both the candidate and the Diplomate Committee (i.e., the Committee). The paper may be completed during the year immediately following the Academy meeting in which the written and oral examinations were taken and passed; however, the candidate is allowed to complete the paper at any time during the 5-year window covered by her/his initial application for Diplomate Status.

The **topic of the paper** should be suggested by the candidate and submitted to the Chair of the Diplomate Program for Committee approval no later than **January 15** of the year in which the paper is to be defended. Final notification of approval of the topic will be provided to the candidate by no later than February 20th of that year. The candidate will then begin work on the project in order to provide a completed project first draft to the Diplomate Chair by July 15. Other dates of interest are provided in the Timeline for Diplomate Candidates at the beginning of this section. The topic of the paper may only be changed with approval of the Diplomate Committee.

The **in-depth paper** can take the form of a Position Paper, Systematic Review, Retrospective Study, Cost/Benefit Analysis, or other style of an authoritative manuscript which demonstrates a representation of the applicant's interests and knowledge of public health / environmental vision. Candidates are not required to collect data as part of their projects; however, should data be collected, issues regarding the limitations and generalizability of the sample need to be clearly identified in the paper. The topic area of the paper must be generally relatable to vision science or optometry. Examples of topic areas of previously completed papers include:

1. Implications of Electronic Medical Records on Ophthalmic Practice
2. Optometric Issues Concerning Blast Injury
3. Race and the Occurrence of Ocular Disease: A Review of Four Major Eye Diseases.
4. Occupational Optometry: Beyond Eye Safety.

The candidate must be solely responsible for the content and preparation of the paper. Multi-authored papers are not acceptable for the purpose of satisfying the requirements for Diplomate status. Papers completed as a part of an ongoing grant funded research project or required as an assignment for an advanced degree, such as an MS, PhD, DrPH, DocSci, are acceptable.

Following a successful review by the Committee, the candidate will be provided an appointed time during the next meeting of the Academy for an oral defense of the paper. Assuming that the paper and oral defense meet the

approval of the Committee, the candidate will be recommended for Diplomate status. New Diplomates are recognized and presented with their Diplomate Certificate during the annual Academy Banquet. If the paper is not acceptable to the Committee, or if the candidate does not pass the oral defense, the process can be repeated. With the Diplomate Committee's approval the original paper can be re-worked, or, the applicant can propose to the Diplomate Committee three new topics by January 15 of the following year.

VI. APPLICATION FEE

At the time of the initial application, or by October 30 of the year of the application, the prospective applicant must submit an application fee of one-hundred dollars (\$100), payable to the American Academy of Optometry.

The application fee, and an accompanying note that the fee is to be credited toward the Diplomate in Public Health Examination, should be forwarded directly to the American Academy of Optometry to the following address:

American Academy of Optometry
2909 Fairgreen Street
Orlando, FL 32803

VII. CANDIDACY PERIOD

In the event that the applicant/candidate does not complete or pass all examinations during the first year of eligibility as either an applicant or candidate, the \$100 application fee will cover a five (5) year candidacy period and apply toward all examinations taken during that period. However, all of the requirements for the Diplomate Program must be met by the applicant within the period of five years from the date of the initial application and payment of the application fee.

If the entire process is not completed by the applicant within the five-year time period, a new application, application fee and a current CV will be required before the diplomate process can be continued by the applicant.

VIII. RENEWAL OF DIPLOMATE STATUS

The Diplomate is a dynamic award and requires continued competency. The Public Health and Environmental Vision Section participates in the Academy wide Diplomate Renewal process. Details regarding this process can be found [here](#).

IX. REVOCATION OF DIPLOMATE STATUS

The Diplomate status of an individual may be revoked by action of the Diplomates of the Section on Public Health if at any time the holder uses it in a manner that violates the rules of conduct expected of Academy Fellows and/or Diplomates in Public Health Optometry.

X. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the Section on Public Health please contact the section chair, the chair of the Diplomate Program or any of the Diplomates in Public Health.