



Deferral of Spring 2021 OSCE — FAQs

Updated April 21, 2021

This document provides answers to questions raised following the April 20th announcement of the deferment of the OSCE exam to July 11, 2021, due to public health requirements. Please refer to the OEBC [COVID-19](#) and [News](#) webpages.

1. Why is OEBC deferring the OSCE administration for seven weeks?

On April 8th, the Government of Ontario issued a province-wide Stay-At-Home order ([O.Reg 265/21](#)) to help stop the spread of COVID-19. It also gave [public health advice](#) regarding self-isolating between provinces. The Government of Canada has also put in place an emergency order under the [Quarantine Act](#) that applies to all travellers arriving in Canada.

So, candidates, examiners, and exam staff who have been out of Ontario must self isolate for 14 days before the exam. Self-reporting that you have completed your isolation would have been required to enter the building on May 16th — exam day.

However, on April 16th, the Ontario government's declaration of emergency and the Stay-at-Home order were extended until May 5th. The Stay-at-Home order requires everyone to remain at home except for specified purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise, or for work that cannot be done remotely. These requirements create an untenable position for candidates, volunteers, and exam personnel from outside the province.

Provincial modelling projects that the COVID-19 numbers in Ontario will be low enough in the summer to enable OEBC to safely administer the OSCE if people follow the public health guidance.

2. If I fail the OSCE on July 11th, can I register for the Fall Administration?

OEBC will accept your registration after the deadline date. You will have 15 days after results are issued to register if you are unsuccessful at the Spring administration and wish to challenge the OSCE on October 17th.

3. Why does OEBC not run virtual OSCE administrations?

The OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) is a practical in-person exam. While it may be possible to virtualize some stations, not all stations lend themselves at this time to a virtual setting. We are piloting two stations in a virtual format later this week.

4. Why does OEBC not run regional OSCEs?

Regional OSCEs are challenging. Exam boards offering regional exams have many more candidates contesting their exams than OEBC. They can overcome some of the logistical and cost challenges identified below. OEBC is a not-for-profit organization, and all of the costs to administer the exams are recovered from the candidates.

Deferral of Spring 2021 OSCE — FAQs

OEBC must ensure fairness, defensibility and validity of the examination. The room set-up is standardized for each station to ensure that the assessors can use objective behavioural criteria to score a candidate's performance and provide candidates with a standardized and consistent exam experience.

In the OSCE, a candidate moves from one room to the next to perform a series of 12 stations. They will find their instructions ([sample for the interactive stations](#); [sample for the non-interactive station](#)) for that station outside the door and have a limited time for the assignment. The location set-up needs about 15 rooms for each track for the stations and marshalling areas.

Few locations have 12 examining rooms that can be made available for the length of time required. The stations with equipment and models are set up the day before to ensure everything is working on exam day. Shipping of the equipment and having experts set it up at regional sites presents additional challenges.

We hold an orientation session before the candidates begin their assessment. During this, the head proctor explains the exam day procedures and emergency procedures. These instructions would change with each regional setting, so additional care is required to affect the candidate's experience adversely.

Examiners and standardized patients will see about 60 candidates during the centralized exam session. We estimate that having regional administrations for 30+ candidates could add up to an additional \$1500/candidate.

Regional exams would require developing more cases and purchasing additional equipment, adding up to another \$500/candidate.

Each day requires a set of 12 new cases. Changing the exam cases prevents day two candidates from cheating by speaking with day one candidates. Regional administration requires either more equipment for stations to run the exams on the same day at each location and/or more cases.

OEBC will be offering the OSCE in Montreal in Spring 2022.

- 5. Consider hosting the OSCE in a few provinces throughout the country. Having a small handful of examiners travel would pose far less risk than having 100+ candidates travel to one location.**

OEBC has considered this as an option. In our recent consultation on technical skills assessment, most stakeholders and all the regulatory authorities preferred a centralized approach to evaluation.

Inter-provincial travel is discouraged in all jurisdictions during the pandemic. Due to the complexity of the OSCE exam and the materials needed, and the challenges associated with travel, and increased costs to candidates, this would not be viable.

Deferral of Spring 2021 OSCE — FAQs

6. **Have you considered spreading the examination dates out over a week? This approach would enable smaller gatherings, less risk of transmission, and an earlier exam date.**

OEBC examiners are practising optometrists and voluntarily give up their weekend to administer the OSCE for OEBC. Each day that OEBC administers an OSCE requires a set of 12 new cases. As a result, this would increase the cost to the candidates.

The spring OSCE is a one-day exam. We need the travel restrictions and COVID-19 cases to ease/lower to administer the OSCE safely.

The deferral of the May 2021 OSCE is due to the government's Stay at Home order.

7. **Can you explain the remote proctoring of the written exam?**

When COVID-19 began in spring 2020, OEBC was unable at that time to implement remote proctoring for the written exam in September due to the time restraints and limited resources.

We are pleased that the spring candidates for 2021 can attempt the written exam as a remote proctoring opportunity. Furthermore, this platform also enables candidates to both limit travel and expenses by having the option to challenge the exam from their home or their choice of location. Due to this, the written exam was not impacted by the current restrictions.

8. **Is the OEBC going to expedite the processing of examination results?**

OEBC's priority is to ensure valid, defensible, reliable results. We understand the urgency to be licensed and will put every effort into providing candidates with their results promptly. We post the exam results on the portal website.

Financial Matters

9. **Would the OEBC support new graduates with individual letters requesting a continued postponement of student loans and line of credit repayments?**

We can confirm that the Board exam is deferred for seven weeks. However, OEBC is not an advocacy body. You may wish to contact your [provincial optometry association](#). As COVID-19 has affected all regions, you would need to reach out to your bank institute to address the postponement of your student loans.

While student loans are a provincial responsibility, the [Canadian Association of Optometrists](#) has been working with the federal government throughout the pandemic. They will raise this issue at their meeting on April 22nd and encourage a national approach.

10. **Who will financially compensate the candidates for the unnecessary months of income loss?**

During these uncertain times, we can only imagine the stress this setback has caused. Please note that we are doing everything we can to complete the spring OSCE as soon as possible.

Getting Registered to Practice

Please address questions about registering for practice to the provincial regulatory authority where you plan to practice optometry.

11. Is it possible for extraordinary collaboration with provincial and territorial licensing bodies to enable a quick and seamless licensing process for all new graduates?

OEBC administers the entry-to-practise exam.

You should start your registration application in the province where you plan to practice optometry now. Completing the application will take some time. Frequently delays are caused when a candidate has not submitted all the required transcripts.

We have established a process with the regulators to provide them with your results as soon as we have them.

12. Consider asking all provincial and territorial licensing boards to allow new graduates to sit and write their jurisprudence exam before the OSCE to enable timely licensing.

OEBC administers the entry-to-practise exam. You would need to address this question to the provincial or territorial regulatory body to which you apply for registration to practice optometry.

By starting your application now, you may be able to schedule/complete your jurisprudence exam before you receive your OEBC exam results. In most jurisdictions, you can write the jurisprudence exam before the OSCE. In some jurisdictions, the jurisprudence exam is emailed to the candidate — an “open book” exam.

13. Consider issuing a temporary license for new graduates. Not only would patients benefit from increased availability of care, but this temporary license would be critical for the maintenance of our optometric skills.

OEBC administers the entry-to-practise exam.

Licensing is governed under provincial legislation. Only a few jurisdictions are authorized to issue a temporary licence. So, check when you start your registration process.