

2017 Registration Review Report

College of Podiatrists of Manitoba

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	2
Context of the Profession in Manitoba	3
Overview of Assessment and Registration Process.....	4
State of Progress.....	6
Progress Opportunities.....	8
Fairness Commissioner’s Recommendation.....	8
College of Podiatrists of Manitoba – Action Plan.....	9
Statement of Compliance	11
Appendix I: 2017 Registration Review Process	12

Executive Summary

The 2017 Registration Review Report for the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM) examines their state of progress with regard to the fair consideration of individuals educated outside of Canada. The Fairness Commissioner identifies progress opportunities and COPOM responds with an action plan.

COPOM's licensure process for internationally educated podiatrists (IEPs) is straightforward, timely and cost-effective. From 2011 to 2016, all eight of COPOM's IEP applicants were successfully registered, taking on average, under a month to do so. This group of applicants trained in recognized academic programs in the United Kingdom and COPOM does not require licensure exams.

Subsequent to their participation in the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner's (OMFC) 2012 self-assessment workshop, COPOM improved its registration information, introducing a helpful assessment overview and making the application guide and application form for internationally educated applicants available online.

Over the last few years, COPOM has been considering major changes to its licensing and assessment practice. First, thought is being given to raise the education standard, requiring doctorate level academic training similar to British Columbia and Alberta. This would support an expanded scope of practice for practitioners. Secondly, COPOM is looking at the competency assessment for podiatrists used in Ontario. Adopting this assessment would support a more thorough, clinical-based evaluation of applicants.

The Fairness Commissioner identifies a need for COPOM to:

- Monitor any future changes to the licensing process to ensure it remains timely, cost effective and successful for internationally educated podiatrists
- Improve registration information
- Revise the criminal records policy such that the security check conducted for immigration purposes by the federal government for landed immigrants is recognized
- Adopt a policy to allow waiving expiration dating on language tests
- Continue to work with the OMFC to improve data collection

In response, COPOM commits with plans to:

- Monitor any changes in standards and consider their impact to ensure a timely, cost-effective and successful process for IEPs
- Provide further information on its website about recognized academic programs and the English language proficiency policy
- Continue to work with OMFC on data collection

The Fairness Commissioner sees COPOM's Action Plan as a largely positive response to the progress opportunities. Further clarification and conversation will be needed to address some of the progress opportunities.

Introduction

The Fairness Commissioner conducts registration reviews following her mandate under *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* (Act) to review the assessment and registration practice of regulatory bodies subject to the Act.

The purpose of a registration review is to enable the Fairness Commissioner to determine a regulator's compliance to the Act and to make recommendations for improvement. Compliance to the legislation refers both to the fairness of assessment and registration practice, with particular attention to the fair consideration of internationally educated applicants, as well as the co-operation of the regulator with the Fairness Commissioner.

The Act stipulates that registration reviews are to be undertaken at times specified by the Fairness Commissioner. It also stipulates that the content of a registration review is to include an analysis of the relevance and necessity of registration requirements, the timeliness of decision-making, the reasonableness of fees and the registration of internationally educated individuals. This may involve the review of any third parties employed in the assessment and registration process.

This 2017 registration review focuses on a few critical issues the Fairness Commissioner has identified as key for Manitoba regulators to make progress; the need for timely registration, the recognition of professional work experience and supervised practice opportunities.

This report evaluates the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba's (COPOM) assessment and registration practice in terms of its overall state of fair practice and for purpose of identifying progress opportunities. This includes an analysis of COPOM's activities to improve practice to date and practices regarding the critical areas of timely registration, the recognition of professional work experience and supervised practice opportunities.

This report is a public document and will be posted on the OMFC's website and submitted to the Minister of Education and Training and the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

Context of the Profession in Manitoba

Podiatrists specialize in treating disorders, diseases and injuries of the feet and lower limbs. Foot pathologies are treated using physical therapy, medication and surgery. Podiatrists work in clinics and hospitals in both public and private practice.

Most podiatrists who practice in Canada are internationally educated. Qualification and licensing requirements in the podiatry profession vary from province to province. Some provinces, like Manitoba, require Baccalaureate level training and two, British Columbia and Alberta, require a more extensive, doctorate level training. There is no nationally recognized education standard.

Academic programs that provide the type of training needed for licensure in Manitoba exist in Ontario, Quebec, United Kingdom, United States, Spain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Podiatrists represent one of Manitoba's smaller professions. As of December 2016, the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba has 26 registered members, 96 per cent of whom are internationally educated.

The College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM) had eight internationally educated podiatrists apply for registration from 2011 to 2016. These podiatrists trained in the United Kingdom and all successfully registered. The average time to registration took just under a month.

Overview of Assessment and Registration Process

The College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM) regulates the practice of podiatry in Manitoba under the authority of *The Podiatrists Act* (C.C.S.M. 2001, c. P93) and Regulation (99/2006). Only persons registered by COPOM may practice podiatry and use the title "podiatrist" or "chiroprapist".

Qualifications

The principal qualification needed to qualify for registration as a podiatrist involves academic training from a recognized program in Podiatric Medicine. The minimum entry requirement is a BSc (Hons) Degree in Podiatric Medicine from an accredited University, or equivalent. Academic programs that offer higher level, doctorate level training are also recognized.

In Canada, there are two podiatry programs, one in Ontario and one in Quebec. Internationally, there are also a few dozen recognized programs, most of which are found in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Some of these recognized podiatry programs offer three or four year Baccalaureate degrees; for example, the program in Ontario and those in the United Kingdom. Others offer four-year doctorate programs in Podiatric Medicine (preceded by a four year Baccalaureate), including the program in Quebec and those offered in the United States.

Assessment and Registration Process

To begin the registration process, applicants complete a COPOM application form, pay a \$150 application fee and submit the following documents:

- photocopy of podiatry degree
- name and address of the dean and faculty that issued the degree
- notarized or certified photograph taken within the last 12 months
- minimum of two professional references
- minimum of two character references
- written verification by the original jurisdiction and every other jurisdiction where the applicant is or has been registered during the last seven years and confirmation of good standing
- for applicants whose first language is not English, language proficiency test results, meeting specific scores from either IELTS or TOEFL. Test results are considered valid for up to two years prior to application
- proof of continuing professional development, CPR and first aid
- criminal record check from the applicant's home country
- verification of immigration status

Upon completed application, COPOM informs individuals in writing within six weeks whether they qualify for registration. There is a \$1,800 annual membership fee and malpractice insurance is required (typically \$1,000 to \$1,300).

Appeal Process

If an application for registration is denied or conditioned, applicants may appeal to COPOM’s Council. Written appeal notification must be filed within 30 days of the decision, specifying reasons for appeal.

The Council will schedule an appeal hearing within 90 days and provide a written decision within 90 days following the hearing. The appellant may appear with counsel. A member of the board of assessors who is also a member of the council may participate in the hearing but does not vote on a decision under this section.

Appeal information accompanies assessment and registration decisions subject to appeal.

Time and Cost

COPOM’s registration process is brief: two to six weeks upon completed application and just over \$3,000 in direct costs for application, membership and malpractice insurance. Additional time and costs may be involved securing documentation. See a list of direct costs below:

Costs

Application for membership	\$150
Annual membership	\$1,800
Annual malpractice insurance	\$1,000 – \$1,300

State of Progress

The College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (CDM) is committed to the fair assessment and recognition of internationally educated podiatrists (IEPs).

COPOM's licensure process for IEPs is timely, cost-effective and to date successful at licensing all who have applied since 2011. Short registration timelines, under a month on average, speak to the council's prompt handling of applications. The numbers are small, but nonetheless this a strong track record.

A large part of this success is due to the simplicity of the process and the homogeneity of applicants. There are no national exams or competence assessments. Since 2011, all of COPOM's applicants trained in recognized academic programs in the United Kingdom.

With only two podiatry programs in Canada and a small pool of academic programs internationally, the profession of podiatry in Manitoba is largely comprised of internationally educated practitioners. COPOM's success with its IEPs is significant given the role this group plays as a source of practitioners for Manitoba.

2013 Registration Review and Recent Progress

COPOM underwent an OMFC registration review in 2013, participating in a two-day self-assessment workshop. At this time, COPOM identified a need to:

- improve assessment and registration information and provide application documents online
- revise its criminal records check policy so that applicants with landed immigration status will no longer need to provide criminal records checks from their home countries
- revise regulations concerning the language proficiency requirements making clear proficiency in English is mandatory

Subsequently, COPOM took steps to improve its registration information, introducing a helpful assessment overview and making the application guide and application form for internationally educated applicants available online.

In 2017, COPOM introduced a new language proficiency policy and plans to amend its regulations such that only English language proficiency will be acceptable. Currently, regulations stipulate proficiency in French or English is acceptable.

Over the last few years, some major changes to COPOM assessment and registration process are under consideration:

- COPOM is currently reviewing competency expectations for podiatrists in Manitoba. Changes are under consideration that would align Manitoba's standards to those in place in British Columbia and Alberta.

- This would mean a move to require a higher, doctorate level of academic training and allow an expanded scope of practice for practitioners. To support the proper regulation of the expanded scope of practice, a merger with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba is under discussion.
- COPOM is reviewing its assessment approach for applicants and is looking at the competency assessment for podiatrists used in Ontario. Currently, COPOM's assessment of qualification is based solely on an applicant's academic training. If access to the assessment could be arranged, COPOM believes it may allow a more relevant and thorough, clinical evaluation of qualification.

Progress Opportunities and Fairness Concerns

COPOM is considering significant changes to its education standard and assessment process. To ensure continued success with its internationally educated applicants, any changes will need to be implemented in a way that supports the timely, cost-effective registration for this group. For instance, if the education standard is raised to require graduate level, doctorate degrees, consideration should be given to offering a different level of licensure for those with Baccalaureate degrees. With regard to the adoption of a new competence assessment, a strategy will need to be in place to provide remedial opportunities for individuals assessed with gaps.

Although COPOM has improved the registration material on its website, more needs to be done. Specifically, complete, accurate and easy-to-read information is needed concerning qualification requirements, including education, currency of practice and the English language proficiency requirements.

With regard to the English language proficiency requirement, COPOM's policy is only to accept language test results dated within two years of application. To be fair, applicants with language test results that meet COPOM's language competency requirements, but fall outside the two-year expiration window, should only be required to be retested if the circumstances suggest it is warranted; if for instance, the applicant has not been working or studying in an English or French environment subsequent to taking the language test. If someone has already met the standard, retesting should be the exception to the rule.

COPOM has worked co-operatively with the OMFC to supply registration data on Manitoba's IEPs. Continued work improving data collection will be helpful to ensure we have a good, fact-based picture of timelines and outcomes. This data may also be helpful to support any future considerations to improve the process.

Progress Opportunities

The Fairness Commissioner sees the following opportunities for progress regarding the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba's assessment and registration practice:

1. Monitoring the impact of any future changes to COPOM's education standard will be needed to ensure the licensure process remains timely, cost effective and successful.
2. Better registration information is needed about COPOM's qualification requirements, including education, currency of practice and the English language proficiency requirements.
3. Recognizing the security check conducted by the federal government for landed immigrants will help avoid an unnecessary documentation requirement.
4. A policy giving COPOM the discretion to waive expiration dating on language test results will help ensure no unnecessary language testing is required.
5. Continuing work with the OMFC to improve data collection will help ensure a strong, fact-based understanding of timelines and outcomes for internationally educated applicants in Manitoba.

Fairness Commissioner's Recommendation

To ensure compliance to *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act*, the Fairness Commissioner recommends that the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba take action regarding the above progress opportunity.

College of Podiatrists of Manitoba – Action Plan

In response to the Fairness Commissioner’s recommendation, the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM) proposed the following Action Plan as of November 27, 2017.

Progress Opportunity	Action(s)	Completion Date
<p>1. Monitoring the impact of any future changes to COPOM’s education standard will be needed to ensure the licensure process remains timely, cost effective and successful.</p>	<p>Commitment to monitor any future education standard changes and consider their potential impact on the licensing process to ensure it remains timely, cost effective and successful.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2. Better registration information is needed about COPOM’s qualification requirements, including education, currency of practice and the English language proficiency requirements.</p>	<p>COPOM will create a clear one page document for use on the www.copom.org website and in application packages. This document will list countries where accredited podiatric education institutions are located, as well as the inclusion of our newly created English language proficiency policy. A final draft will be presented to the OMFC for review.</p>	<p>Summer 2018</p>
<p>3. Recognizing the security check conducted by the federal government for landed immigrants will help avoid an unnecessary documentation requirement.</p>	<p>We would welcome more information regarding the Federal Government security check process including: time frames, backlogs (if applicable) and an overview of the process before committing to removing this registration step.</p>	<p>Council will review upon receipt of requested information</p>
<p>4. A policy giving COPOM the discretion to waive expiration dating on language test results will help ensure no unnecessary language testing is required.</p>	<p>We may consider this waiver, however, the COPOM Council has concerns that during the period from language testing to licensure, applicants may immerse themselves in temporary employment and communities using and living in their Mother Tongue for up to two years, which could result in a rapid regression of English language skills.</p>	<p>TBD upon further discussion with the OMFC</p>

Progress Opportunity	Action(s)	Completion Date
5. Continuing work with the OMFC to improve data collection will help ensure a strong, fact-based understanding of timelines and outcomes for internationally educated applicants in Manitoba.	Continue to work with the OMFC on data collection.	Ongoing

Action Plan Follow-Up

A planned follow-up meeting with COPOM and the OMFC will be scheduled in January 2019 to discuss implementation of activities and updates to the Action Plan.

The OMFC will review any Action Plan update submitted by COPOM and provide a statement confirming the actions address the Fairness Commissioner’s recommendation, improving compliance to *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act*, or drawing attention to any outstanding concerns.

Action Plan updates are posted on OMFC’s website on an annual basis, after each follow-up meeting.

Statement of Compliance

Over the course of our review with the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM), we have learned Manitoba's podiatry profession is at a crossroads considering raising the education standard and introducing a competency assessment. These changes would have a significant impact on Manitoba's podiatry profession.

To date the College of Podiatrists of Manitoba (COPOM) has managed a successful and timely licensure process for internationally educated podiatrists. With almost all of its applicants being internationally educated, this is important for Manitoba.

The key moving forward with changes to their assessment process and education standard will be to ensure timely, cost-effective and successful licensing of internationally educated podiatrists. COPOM's commitment to ensure this is the case aligns with the intent of *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* to improve licensure processes for internationally educated professionals in Manitoba.

Some aspects of COPOM's Action Plan could be stronger. My hope is that with further clarification and conversation, as well with the assistance my office can offer, we will see positive actions in these areas.

I appreciate COPOM's frank and open discussion of these matters and am impressed with the knowledge, insight, and public interest sensibility of COPOM's leadership. I look forward to our continued engagement.

I look forward to our future engagement.



Ximena Munoz
Manitoba Fairness Commissioner

Appendix I: 2017 Registration Review Process

The OMFC's review process has several key steps: meeting to discuss the focus and process of the review, agreeing to a review schedule, documenting, evaluating and preparing a progress report, and achieving an action plan to move things forward. The process is designed to support regulators to further evolve registration practice and realize progressive change.

Activity	Description	Date
Registration Review Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group meeting between OMFC and regulators Latest data and research presented Fairness Standard, review focus and process presented Review schedule provided 	June 10, 2016
Progress Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on COPOM fair practice progress Includes analysis of timely registration, recognition of professional work experience and supervised practice opportunities Progress opportunity identified Recommendation from Fairness Commissioner to address the progress opportunity 	October 10, 2017
Progress Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COPOM and Fairness Commissioner discuss report and possible actions COPOM is considering addressing the progress opportunity 	October 31, 2017
COPOM Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COPOM's Action Plan submitted to OMFC 	November 27, 2017
2017 Registration Review Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report submitted to COPOM Report contains the review findings, COPOM's Action Plan, and the Fairness Commissioner's Compliance Statement 	December 5, 2017
Registration Review Closeout Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COPOM and Fairness Commissioner discuss Registration Review Report, potential OMFC support for actions and how COPOM's action plan will inform the relationship moving forward Registration Review Report submitted to Minister of Education and Training, the Minister of Justice and uploaded on OMFC website 	December 14, 2017
Action Plan Follow-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting between COPOM and OMFC to discuss status of action plan implementation 	January 2019

Review participants:

Dr. Martin Colledge, Registrar, College of Podiatrists of Manitoba

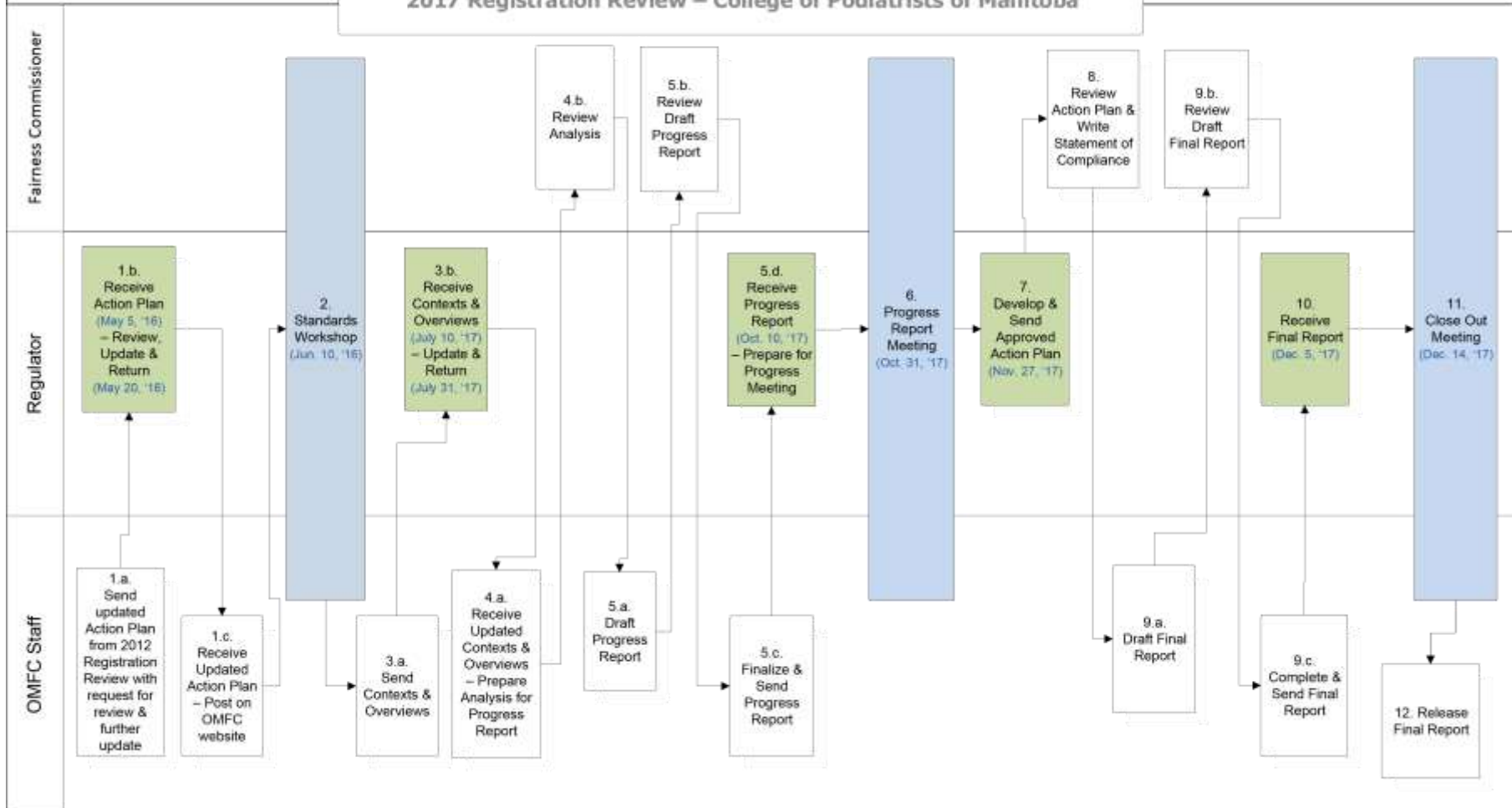
Dr. Amar Gupta, Treasurer, College of Podiatrists of Manitoba

Lesley Phimister, Administrator, College of Podiatrists of Manitoba

OFFICE OF THE MANITOBA FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER

2017 Registration Review – College of Podiatrists of Manitoba

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