

# Frequently Asked Questions

*Optometry Australia Credentialled Advanced Practitioner - Glaucoma (OACAP-G)*

Updated March 2025

## What is the Optometry Australia Advanced Practice Recognition (APR) Program?

The Optometry Australia APR Program is a new initiative by Optometry Australia, designed to recognise and credential optometrists with expertise in specific clinical areas. The APR Program's first focus is on glaucoma, with plans to expand into other areas.

Importantly, the APR Program in no way reduces the existing scope of practice of the profession. Instead, it provides an avenue for members to pursue and be recognised for advanced practice in particular areas.

## Why was Optometry Australia's APR Program introduced?

The APR Program is a cornerstone of Optometry Australia's [Optometry 2040 vision](#), aiming to equip the profession for future healthcare needs. It fosters career progression, empowering members to meet evolving healthcare needs, promote optometrist-to-optometrist referrals, enhance collaborative care, and enhance the profession's role in multidisciplinary teams. It also addresses workforce concerns, such as oversupply and career stagnation, while enhancing optometry's role in multidisciplinary care.

## What additional benefits will credentialled practitioners receive through Optometry Australia's APR Program?

Graduates of the APR Program will earn the title "Optometry Australia Credentialled Advanced Practitioner – Glaucoma" along with a suite of benefits which include:

- Use of logo and title to convey their advanced expertise to peers, patients, and the broader community.
- Inclusion in a credentialled practitioners directory, facilitating referrals and collaborative opportunities.
- Access to a network of advanced practitioner peers for support, learning, and sharing best practices.
- Invitations to exclusive annual symposia to deepen clinical knowledge and foster professional connections.
- Recognition for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities undertaken during the credentialling process.

## How can optometrists apply for Optometry Australia's APR Program?

Optometrists interested in applying for the Optometry Australia APR Program are invited to read more [here](#), where you will find further information and the application form.

The first intake round for the APR Program will run from March 2025. We are then anticipating two intake rounds per financial year from 2026-26.

Applicants will be assessed against the APR Program's rigorous clinical competencies and experiential criteria, which are aligned with local and international standards.

## Can all optometrists apply to become an Optometry Australia Credentialled Advanced Practitioner – Glaucoma?

To be eligible optometrists will need to demonstrate that they:

- Are an Optometry Australia Member
- Have advanced experience in glaucoma care management
- Are committed to completing the Program over a 4-month period starting April 2025

To successfully achieve credentialling, optometrists must:

**Step 1:** Submit your application form and CV.

**Step 2:** Submit evidence showing your clinical experience in glaucoma (e.g.: case logs, lectures, publications, advanced certificates).

**Step 3:** Submit two detailed 3,000-word case reports demonstrating your clinical expertise in glaucoma.

**Step 4:** Provide a brief written response demonstrating your leadership competencies.

**Step 5:** Participate in a 1-hour Clinical Discussion Interview

Documentation to support each step can be found online, [here](#).

## What will I need to do to maintain Credentialling over time?

To maintain the status and title of Optometry Australia Credentialed Advanced Practitioner – Glaucoma (OACAP-G), credentialed professionals must participate in an annual APR Program Symposium. This event will feature lectures or grand rounds, focusing on case-based learning and literature reviews, and will be facilitated by credentialed practitioners, including ophthalmologists.

For those unable to attend the live event, a recording will be available. However, practitioners must review the recording and participate in a separate one-hour facilitated drop-in session to meet the requirement.

Additionally, credentialed professionals must manage a minimum of 20 glaucoma patients per calendar year. Optometry Australia reserves the right to conduct spot audits to verify compliance.

## How much does the APR Program cost?

The application fee to become an Optometry Australia Credentialed Advanced Practitioner – Glaucoma is \$2,200.

In addition, an annual fee of approximately \$300 will be charge upon registration to the APR Program Symposium.

The application and symposium fees are non-refundable.

## How long will it take me to complete the assessment process for Optometry Australia's APR Program?

It is anticipated that the time between submitting an application and reaching the final step – a 1-hour Clinical Discussion Interview – will take 3-4 months. The time commitment will vary for each optometrist, but at a minimum, you should allow approximately 30 hours to prepare your submissions and attend the interview.

The assessment process is conducted entirely online, and no placements are required.

To help you better understand the requirements for each step, we recommend reviewing the comprehensive overview of the APR Program requirements and assessment process, available on our [website](#).

All assessment instructions and templates are available on our website. We strongly encourage all optometrists interested in applying for APR to review these documents early and consider preparing some of their submissions in advance to help avoid delays during the assessment process.

Our team is also available to help you navigate the assessment requirements – contact us on [policy@optometry.org.au](mailto:policy@optometry.org.au) at any time.

## Can I claim CPD as part of the APR Program?

Yes, you can claim CPD hours for both the work completed during the assessment process and your participation in the annual APR Program Symposium.

For the assessment process, you will need to self-assess the number of hours spent on each assignment. To make this easier, we have included a self-assessment opportunity upon successful completion of the program. Simply complete and submit the CPD form, and we will update your member record—no extra admin required!

The annual APR Program Symposium will be quality assured, meaning CPD hours will be pre-attributed to the event, just as they are for our other education events. These CPD hours will be automatically recorded in your CPD Portfolio after the event.

## **I didn't get selected for the intake round I applied for, what happens next?**

Unfortunately, we can only select up to 20 candidates for each intake round. If you are not selected this time, there's no need to worry—you will be placed on the waitlist for the next round. Our APR team will reach out to you before the next intake opens to discuss the opportunity to submit an application.

## **What governance structures are in place for Optometry Australia's APR Program?**

The APR Program is supported by robust governance, including an Advanced Practice Oversight Committee (APOC) and a Clinical Advisory Committee (CAC). The Advanced Practice Oversight Committee (APOC) has been established to ensure the APR Program's integrity and effectiveness from inception.

A Clinical Advisory Committee (CAC) has also been set up, comprising a carefully selected group of experienced practitioners tasked with defining competencies and experiential criteria for our first clinical area of excellence, glaucoma management. The CAC will be replicated for all future areas of advanced practice recognition.

These committees were carefully selected to ensure the APR Program's integrity and to represent the profession, while defining clinical competencies, and overseeing the development of the APR Program. Committee members comprise:

- practitioners from diverse backgrounds and practice locations across Australia
- representatives from both corporate and independent practice
- practitioners who are at different stages of their careers; and
- individuals who are experts in their respective fields, including stakeholders such as consumer bodies and regulatory bodies.

## **Is Optometry Australia's APR Program endorsed by regulatory bodies?**

Optometry Australia is currently seeking Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) endorsement for the APR Program. This endorsement will further validate the Program and ensure it meets high regulatory standards.

## **What future clinical areas will Optometry Australia's APR Program cover?**

While glaucoma management is the first area of focus, Optometry Australia plans to expand the APR Program to other clinical areas. These may include areas such as diabetic retinopathy, contact lenses or retinal diseases, allowing optometrists to develop and be recognised for advanced competencies in multiple clinical specialties.

## **How does Optometry Australia's APR Program compare to other local and international advanced practice frameworks?**

While the APR Program is an Australian optometry initiative, its competencies and assessment criteria were designed with examples from both local and overseas advanced practice frameworks. These examples were drawn not only from optometry but also from other allied health professions, medical models, and even professions such as accounting. This ensures that Australian optometrists recognised under the APR Program meet standards of advanced practice comparable to those applied locally and internationally.

## **What is the difference between Optometry Australia's APR and the Australian College of Optometry Advanced Certificate in Glaucoma?**

The APR Program is part of a national initiative to establish formal advanced practice recognition for optometrists, providing a structured pathway for recognition at an advanced level.

In contrast, the ACO Advanced Certificate in Glaucoma is a postgraduate education program designed to enhance clinical knowledge and skills but does not, on its own, confer advanced practice recognition. However, completion of the ACO certificate will earn Recognition of Prior Learning points towards Optometry Australia's APR Program, contributing to the recognition pathway.

## **How does Optometry Australia's APR program sit with Ahpra guidelines regarding advertising?**

[Ahpra Advertising Guidelines](#) allow practitioners to advertise their qualifications, training or experience as long as the information is factual and does not imply specialist registration. We sought legal advice to confirm that "Optometry Australia Credentialed Advanced Practitioner – Glaucoma" is an example of permissible wording.

## **If I successfully become credentialled, do I need to change my registration with Ahpra?**

No, there is no need to change your Ahpra registration. All optometrists in Australia will remain under general registration with Ahpra. The program is designed to recognise and credential advanced clinical expertise without altering your existing registration status.

## **If I successfully become credentialled, what new income opportunities might my practice or I expect?**

Credentialled Advanced Practitioners may benefit from new opportunities, including:

- Increased patient referrals due to recognised expertise.
- The ability to attract and manage more complex cases within their scope.
- Opportunities to participate in professional speaking engagements, education, and training.
- Top performing past graduates of the APR Program will have opportunity to serve as assessors for future candidates, with remuneration provided for their role in the assessment process.

## **How does Optometry Australia's APR Program benefit patients and the community?**

For patients and the broader community, the hope for the Optometry Australia APR Program will improve access to eye care services, reduces wait times, and offers a more streamlined patient experience. Patients can receive care from a local optometrist credentialled in specific areas, reducing the need for travel and lowering costs. Enhanced co-management between optometrists and other health professionals also improves patient safety and care outcomes.

## **How does Optometry Australia's APR Program benefit ophthalmologists?**

Strengthened collaborative care pathways between ophthalmologists and optometrists can enhance the co-management of glaucoma patients. By working together, optometrist and ophthalmologists can help improve patient access to timely care, reduce wait times, and ensure that ophthalmologists can focus on specialised cases. This approach also fosters greater trust and understanding between the professions, ultimately benefiting patient outcomes.

## **How does Optometry Australia's APR Program benefit other health professionals?**

The APR Program fosters better collaboration between optometrists and other health professionals. Optometrists with advanced practice recognition can actively participate in complex care teams, improving patient outcomes and delivering more integrated, patient-centred care.