BECOMING A MEMBER
CANDIDACY FOR FELLOWSHIP IN THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPTOMETRY

EARNING FELLOWSHIP— THE ORAL EXAMINATION

Oral Examination:
The oral examination is given at each annual and international Academy meeting. The objective of the oral examination is to evaluate candidates on their professional competence in solving their patients’ problems at a level commensurate with the standards set by the Academy. In the case of candidates who are not in clinical practice, standards relevant to the candidate’s professional activity shall be utilized. Candidates will be examined on the basis of the credentials and written work they have submitted to the committee. Whenever possible, a candidate will be examined before the same committee that evaluated their written work. The examination normally takes place on the Friday (third day) of the annual meeting, or for candidates outside of North America whom so desire during the biennial international meeting (if held).

Preparation for Oral Examination includes:

Clinical Candidates: The prospect of sitting for the oral examination can be a little intimidating. With few exceptions, the members conducting the oral examination are those committee members who have reviewed your case reports. The following information is designed to help the candidate prepare for the oral examination:

1. Candidates should bring their case reports, published papers, and any supportive documentation.

2. Prior to the oral examination, review the case reports and any questions the regional committee presented about the cases. Be prepared to answer the questions as part of the oral examination. This includes case reports that were evaluated and sent back for further consideration. Even if you opted to write another case report, be prepared to answer examiners’ questions about the originals.

3. If published papers or lectures were submitted for points, review the subject prior to the oral examination and be able to discuss the paper or presentation. If a published paper was written more than four years ago, review recent literature in order to explain current thinking about the topic.

4. The candidate should exhibit a depth of knowledge about the chosen subject area. If the case report was on binocular vision, for example, questions that may be
asked could include, “what types of binocular vision problems might be encountered in a person who has diabetes?” If a case report was submitted which involved the co-management of a patient who had cataract surgery, questions regarding how various complications are managed (even if limited by scope of practice to refer) may be addressed.

5. If points were obtained through a residency, extensive knowledge in the chosen field of study should be expected. For example, if the candidate completed a pediatric vision residency, questions may include such issues as childhood illnesses, low visions issues, pediatric contact lenses or child abuse. A candidate who has completed a residency is expected to have a superior breadth and depth of knowledge.

6. If points were obtained through leadership, be able to describe your accomplishments and contributions to optometry. Other questions regarding how you will use your leadership skills as a Fellow of the Academy may also be addressed.

7. Subsequent questions during the interview may evolve from the answers given by the candidate in defense of their written work, residency, or leadership and should allow the committee to evaluate the candidates general knowledge on subjects such as anatomy, physiology, pathology, low vision, contact lenses, etc., as it relates to their specialized areas of practice.

8. The questioning should probe the candidate’s ability to think and support his/her philosophy of practice.

9. Basic knowledge and high standards of care are required for admittance.

At the Conclusion of the Oral Examination:
All candidates will be notified at the end of their oral examination if they successfully completed the oral examination. Those candidates will be given a “New Fellow” ribbon to wear on their identification badge. Candidates who were not successful will meet with their Examination Committee Chair and either the Vice Chair or Chair of the Admittance Committee. An explanation of the committee’s reason(s) for the non-pass will be given. Their Examination Committee Chair will outline further requirements needed to complete the admittance process.