American Academy of Optometry
Low Vision Section

Research Low Vision Diplomate Program

CANDIDATE’S GUIDE
(Revised June 2015)

Diplomate status in the Low Vision Section of the American Academy of Optometry is recognition of academic achievement by Academy Fellows in the assessment and management of the rehabilitation needs of persons with impaired vision. Fellows who have expertise in low vision but who are primarily researchers are encouraged to become candidates for the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program. (See officer listings for contact information at the end of this guide or on the Academy website for the Clinical and Research Diplomate Chairs.)

Participation in the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program can provide a rewarding learning experience and a satisfying recognition of competency. Additionally, it offers opportunities to meet colleagues from many parts of the country and world who share mutual interests and concerns and with whom collaboration may be conducted. Research Low Vision Diplomates work and practice in a wide range of settings; including optometric institutions and other universities, hospitals and rehabilitation agencies.

After successfully completing the program, Diplomates are expected to stay abreast of new developments and remain engaged in the field, including acceptance of responsibilities and leadership in lecturing, writing, and teaching within the Academy and within its Low Vision Section. Diplomates are expected to participate in Annual Academy Meetings and must renew their qualifications every five years by documenting continued activity in low vision research, professional activities, and teaching as a way to help ensure their status as a Research Low Vision Diplomate and which reflects the high standard of expertise characteristic of the Academy and Low Vision Section.

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I. Requirements for Becoming a Candidate for Diplomate Status

There are specific eligibility requirements for Fellows who wish to become Candidates for the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program. Potential candidates should carefully review their own credentials before applying to this Diplomate Program to determine if additional experience should precede application.

Eligibility:

Category I (Absolute Criteria)

The Candidate must be a Fellow of the Academy of Optometry for at least one (1) year. The Candidate must show active participation in the Academy Low Vision Section.
The Candidate must be sponsored by three Active (Clinical or Research) Low Vision Diplomates who have submitted letters of reference to the Chairman attesting to the Candidate's involvement in low vision research and his/her regional, national and/or international prominence as well as worthiness to become a Research Low Vision Diplomate.

These criteria fulfilled, the Candidate's CV will be evaluated by the Low Vision Diplomate Executive Committee and the Research Low Vision Diplomate Chair using the following criteria:

Category II

A. Publications: Candidates must have a minimum of five published research papers in leading refereed journals. At least two of the papers should have been published within the past three years. Candidates are required to submit copies of each of these five published papers.

B. National Reputation: The candidate should have established a reputation as being a significant contributor to the advancement of the knowledge related to low vision and its rehabilitation. Candidates should identify the scientific and professional communities in which they are best known, and describe their own reputation within these communities. Candidate should list any prizes, awards, grants or other honors that attest to their reputation.

C. Professional Organizations: The candidate should be an active participant and show signs of leadership potential in professional and scientific organizations whose purview includes low vision research. Candidates should submit a list of the organizations in which they participate and describe their past and anticipated future roles within these organizations.

D. Research: The Candidate should have a history of at least five years of active involvement in low vision research and development. Currently they should be engaged in low vision research and be planning to be involved in low vision research in the future. Candidates should submit a brief description of their history in vision research with an emphasis on activities within the last five years including all funded grant activities. They should also briefly describe their plans for future low vision research.

E. Lectures: The Candidate should have an established record of presenting lectures, papers, posters or courses on low vision and low vision research at scientific and professional meetings in optometry, medicine, rehabilitation, public health, or similar professional settings. Candidates are required to submit a list of all such presentations within the last five years and for longer if they wish. The list submitted should identify the audience, the title, the authorship list, and nature of the presentation and date of each presentation.

The Candidate must fulfill all five areas above for acceptance.

4. Submission of a current curriculum vita is required. This document should include specific activities relevant to the above eligibility criteria.

5. Applications are submitted online and accessed through the Academy website. Payment of an application fee of $100.00 must be submitted once the application is approved. Once accepted as a candidate, this fee is nonrefundable.

Application Deadline: Applications can be submitted at any time, but should be submitted by June 1 if the applicant seeks to sit for any examinations at the annual Academy meeting which occurs in late Fall of that year.
II. Overview of the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program

The Executive Committee in conjunction with the Chair of the Research Low Vision Diplomate Program will evaluate the Candidate’s CV and letters of recommendation. If the Candidate meets the criteria and the application is accepted, the Candidate must complete the following four requirements to achieve Research Diplomate status:

a) Submit a summary of research in low vision over the Candidate’s career highlighting the last five years
b) Submit a written discussion of the clinical importance of two recent research publications (reprints should also be submitted).
c) Oral Examination

Both (a) and (b) above should be submitted to the current Research Diplomate Chair who will evaluate the documents and provide feedback. The oral examination is given at the annual Academy Meeting, usually during the first two days of the meeting.

Oral Examination: The oral examination will only be administered after the Candidate successfully completes all of the other requirements. The oral examination will be conducted by the Research Diplomate Examination Committee and will cover aspects of the Candidate’s research with emphasis on the published papers submitted. Questions may be asked to further explore strengths and weaknesses in the Candidate’s knowledge on such topic(s). The oral examination will stress conceptual grasps of topic areas rather than knowledge of details or skills in manipulating data. The final decision regarding an applicant’s completion or non-completion of the Research Diplomate will be made by the Research Diplomate Examination Committee and will be forwarded to the Chair of the Low Vision Diplomate Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the Academy.

Candidacy period: A Candidate is expected to complete all portions of the examination process by the third consecutive Academy meeting following acceptance into the program. Candidates are encouraged to schedule their examinations within one year of application date.

Candidates who have not completed requirements for Diplomate status within the requisite three-year period can apply for an automatic one-year extension using the same procedures as new applicants. There will be a fee equal to that of new applicants to the Diplomate Program payable to the American Academy of Optometry. If requirements are not completed by the end of that one-year extension, individuals must re-apply and start the Diplomate process again from the beginning.

Additionally, the Low Vision Diplomate Executive Committee reserves the right to extend the candidacy period for specific candidates based on individual circumstances.

Preparation for Written Reports and Examination: Candidates are assigned a mentor who provides guidance on the written material to be submitted for review and preparation for the oral examination. Direct contact with the Diplomate assigned to oversee the required documents or oral examination process allows for further instruction and guidance.

Attendance at low vision lectures, workshops, paper and poster sessions, symposia, and section meetings at the Annual Academy meeting is encouraged as they may provide useful
additional preparation.

**Feedback on Progress toward Diplomate Status:** Candidates who take the written and/or oral examinations for Diplomate status during a given year will meet with Program officers at the Annual Meeting to review performance and provide feedback. Candidates are also encouraged to work closely with their assigned mentors to assist them in areas that have been identified as needing additional study.

**Summary of Research:** Candidates should submit a report summarizing their research activities and accomplishments in low vision. They should also describe their current research activities and their plans for further research in the area. The report should include any relevant publications, grants, presentations, and other supporting evidence.

**Published Articles:** Candidates must submit a summary of published research articles or papers (along with the reprints) along with comments on the importance of their work and any impact it has had on the field. Candidates should also submit reprints of at least three more published articles related to low vision.

**Questions and Concerns:** Questions concerning the submission and review of Written Reports should be directed to the Chairperson, Research Diplomate Examination Committee. (See listing at the end of this guide or on the Section website.)

### III. Oral Examination

**Eligibility:** The orals examination will only be offered after the Candidate successfully completes all other requirements.

**Purpose:** The oral examination provides an opportunity for Candidates to more fully reveal their particular research approach and outcomes.

**Format:** In a congenial and professional atmosphere, the candidate will be asked questions primarily related to their publications and research areas. The Chair will structure the interview to include questions to gain insight into strengths and weaknesses of the candidate as revealed in their written reports. In developing questions, the Chair will coordinate a review of comments from the candidate’s research discussions or publications.

Questions demanding knowledge of details or computational skills will be kept to a minimum.

**Timing:** 30 to 45 minutes are typically allotted for the Oral Examination.

**Questions:** Questions concerning the administration of the Oral Examination should be directed to the Chairperson of the Research Diplomate Examination Committee. See current listing at the end of this guide or the Academy website.

**Awarding of Research Diplomate in Low Vision:** Upon successful completion of all requirements, candidates are officially nominated for Diplomate status and must be approved by the Low Vision Section and the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Optometry. Approved nominees are expected to attend the Annual Banquet at which they are officially introduced as new Research Low Vision Diplomates.
Renewal of Research Diplomate Status: Diplomates are expected to document active and current involvement in low vision. Accordingly, Research Diplomates are expected to renew their status every five years according to specific criteria assigning points for research and other activities. They need to generate 25 points every five years, with a minimum of eight points in any three of those years.

IV. Executive Committee of the Low Vision Diplomate Program

Current Chairpersons and Officers (through 2016 meeting)

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