



OCULARISTS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (NPC)

An Eye on the Profession

Seeing Clearly

The Ocularists Association of Southern Africa (OASA) is hosting its first ever stakeholder consultative meeting on 11 August 2015. History is in the making! The consultative meeting seeks to find common ground between all stakeholders in the development of a training programme for new Ocularists, as well as the registration of a second designation with SAQA.

OASA was recognized by SAQA on 28 November 2012 as a professional body for the purposes of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008. The NQF Act requires, amongst others, recognized professional bodies to co-operate with the relevant Quality Councils in respect of qualifications and quality assurance in its occupational field.

There are only 15 ocularists in South Africa. Ocularists have traditionally been trained in an apprenticeship mode over five years and no formal training has occurred since 2006.

In considering the profession in Europe, in almost all instances, one can expect to commit at least five years to become an ocularist. That is how long the apprenticeship programmes take. Candidate selection is rigorous because of the technical complexity, artistic potential and emotional intelligence that are part and parcel of the profession. Similarly, in the United States, a person must learn how to make artificial eyes through an apprenticeship with an approved ocularist (approved by the American Society of Ocularists - ASO). The ASO Apprentice Program requires that the apprentice must study all aspects of ocular prosthetics, and spend five years (10,000 hours) in practical training. The apprentice must also successfully complete 750 credits of related study courses offered by the Education Program of the ASO. Upon successful completion of all requirements, the title, Diplomate of the American Society of Ocularists, is awarded.

People from all walks of life are affected by eye loss – rich and poor, male and female, young and old, white and black. OASA estimates that, given the South African population size, approximately 5000 prosthetic eyes are needed per year. The private sector is presently meeting around 25% of this need. Ocularistry is an aging profession in South Africa with the average age of practitioners being over 45 years.

The picture is clear: there are only 15 ocularists in the country with no pipeline training and a mountainous need to meet. South Africa needs more trained ocularists who subscribe to the highest standards of professionalism.

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