

ABDO College
Full Approval Quality Assurance Visit
Fellowship Dispensing Diploma Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing
9 & 10 February 2021 Two-day visit

Date report completed	15 February 2021
Report confirmed by General Optical Council (GOC)	15 April 2021

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PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowship Dispensing Diploma • Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing • BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing
Programme type	See box directly above
Programme description	<p>Fellowship Dispensing Diploma, Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing & BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are required to be working in practice for a minimum of 30 hours per week under a GOC registered supervisor. • Teaching is delivered using a blended learning format that involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 32 course units studied by distance learning. Students are expected to study for a minimum of 15 hours per week. ➤ Four weeks block release each academic year for which students are required to attend the College for face-to-face learning in a classroom setting*. • Students must remain members of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) and the GOC for the duration of their studies. • Successful students receive an award from ABDO Examinations (ABDOEx) upon successful completion of their qualifying exams. <p>The Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing & BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These programmes are delivered in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). Students receive an award from the CCCU on successful completion of the BSc (Hons) degree. • Completion of the BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing is dependent on completing the two-year Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing. • The programmes on their own do not confer a licence to practice as a dispensing optician. Students must successfully complete most of the theory and all the practical examinations delivered by ABDOEx. • There are six, 20 credit, modules in each year of this course. <p>* Due to the COVID-19 emergency the teaching usually delivered during the residential blocks has been transferred online.</p>
Current approval status	Full approval
Approved student number	360 per cohort (this includes intake to all programmes in total)

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (panel)	
Chair	Alan Kershaw – Lay
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Chatham - Dispensing/Contact Lens Optician • Maryna Hura - Dispensing Optician • Carl Stychin - Lay • Pam McClean - IP Optometrist
GOC representative	Ella Pabee - Approval & Quality Assurance Officer
Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie Carter - Lay • Andy Husband – Lay • Graeme Kennedy - IP Optometrist

1.4. Purpose of the visit	
Visit type	Quality Assurance Visit
<p>The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit is to review ABDO College's (College) suite of dispensing programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowship Dispensing Diploma • Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing • BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing <p>(programmes) against the requirements, as listed in the <i>GOC's Guidelines for the Approval & Quality Assurance of Routes to GOC Registration for Dispensing Opticians 2011</i> (handbook) and the <i>GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Documents-List of Requirements</i> (list of requirements).</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 emergency this visit took place remotely.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event Type	Overview
26 & 27 September 2018	Visit	<p>A quality assurance revisit is carried out to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow up on the condition agreed at the July 2017 Education Committee meeting. • consider the management and impact of the increased student numbers as agreed by the GOC Education Committee in July 2017. <p>Based on the findings, the panel recommends the following to the Education Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the previous condition is met. • one new condition is set. • one new recommendation is offered. • the next quality assurance visit takes place in approximately December 2020 to allow the panel to see how the new quality mechanisms have been embedded.
December 2018	Submission	Upon the submission of sufficient evidence, the condition set in 2018 is deemed met (see section 1.6 for further information).

1.6 Previous conditions

The condition listed below is extracted from the report of the full approval quality assurance visit undertaken on 26 & 27 September 2018.

Condition	Status
The final approved version of the Quality Assurance Manual must be submitted to the GOC.	MET

PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes & summary of recommendations to the GOC	
Visit outcomes	<p>The panel recommends that full approval for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowship Dispensing Diploma • Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing • BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing programmes should continue, subject to two conditions being met.
New conditions	<p>The panel recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two requirements be deemed unmet. • two actions are set.
New recommendations	<p>The panel recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two recommendations are offered
New commendations	<p>The panel recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three commendations are offered
Current student numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1 - 50 • Year 2 - 171 • Year 3 -174 <p>These are the totals for all three programmes from September 2020.</p>
Approval/next visit	<p>The panel recommends that the next full approval quality assurance visit takes place in February 2024. This is to enable the panel to review information on developments with the programmes between now and then; and to assess the requirements it was unable to during this visit due to the COVID-19 emergency (see section 2.2 for further information).</p>
Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g., when students are in, hospital, audit etc.	<p>The next visit is intended to review the programme against the relevant requirements and standards. The outcomes of the GOC's Education Strategic Review (ESR) will be in place by the time of the next visit so the executive will need to be clear which quality assurance process the programmes will be reviewed against.</p> <p>The panel will need to pay particular attention to the requirements that were unable to be assessed due to the format of this visit.</p>

2.2 Unable to assess requirements		
As a result of the COVID-19 emergency the panel was unable to fully assess the requirements listed below. These unassessed requirements will be reviewed as part of ongoing quality assurance activity.		
D2.1	The education and training facilities, infrastructure and staffing must be sufficient to deliver and maintain the route to registration.	Due to the COVID-19 emergency the visit was held remotely which meant the panel was unable to assess the building & equipment. It suggests that these are reviewed at the next visit.
D3.4	Competency-based assessments must be carried out at suitable junctures throughout the training. The portfolio must contain a record of patient experience and the achievement of all competency elements.	Due to the COVID-19 emergency the visit was held remotely which meant the panel was unable to review student portfolios. It was sufficiently assured by conversations held during the visit that this requirement can be deemed met. It suggests that these are reviewed at the next visit.

2.3 Non-applicable requirements		
<p>The panel recommends that some requirements be deemed <i>fully</i> or <i>partially</i> non-applicable to the programmes due to their structure and the differing, but overlapping, roles and responsibilities of the College and ABDOEx, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the responsibility of ABDOEx to check students have acquired the 1600 hours necessary to qualify. • ABDOEx awards the Fellowship of British Dispensing Opticians (FBDO). • The College only provides the theory aspect of the route to registration. • ABDOEx is responsible for the supervised practice and ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision. <p>The panel recommends that requirements D3.10 & D3.21 be deemed not applicable.</p> <p>The panel recommends that requirements D3.12 -D3.16 be deemed applicable only to the Fellowship Diploma programme in relation to the practical/clinical experience students gain during their attendance on the residential block. The panel was satisfied that requirements D3.12-D3.16 are sufficiently met during these sessions.</p>		
D3.10	Students, regardless of mode of training, must complete a period of supervised pre-qualification experience amounting to no fewer than 1600 hours, in order to register as a qualified dispensing optician.	
D3.11	A set of defined tasks must be successfully undertaken and evidenced with detailed case records presented in the portfolio (see relevant competencies and patient experience requirements).	
D3.12	A record must be kept of the full evidence of the dispensing experience gained so as to demonstrate that the required total numbers of frame fittings, adjustments and verification of spectacles have been completed at the appropriate stage in the training programme.	
D3.13	The students' practical experience and PBL must include access to unselected patients with a wide range of ages, ocular conditions and refractive status.	
D3.14	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain instruction, demonstration and supervision by experienced registered practitioners in general and specialist practice settings.	

D3.15	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain small group practical instruction which incorporates student observation, practitioner demonstration and direct student participation.
D3.16	The students' practical experience and PBL must contain specific experience relating to low vision and paediatric dispensing.
D3.21	Effective quality assurance measures must be in place.

PART 3 –CONDITIONS, ACTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conditions set at the visit	
Conditions are applied to training and assessment providers if there is evidence that the GOC requirements are not met. The conditions (unmet requirements) for this visit are set out below along with the actions that are required to meet the requirement.	
A6.2	Providers must provide sufficient information to the GOC, as requested, and in a timely manner.
Action 1	<p>The College must submit a revised risk register/assessment that provides a realistic appraisal of all the material risks currently facing the GOC-approved programmes delivered by the College including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the financial sustainability of the programmes from now until the end of academic year 2021-22. • present and projected student numbers. • the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 emergency including the postponement of student assessments and furloughing of staff. <p>This risk register/assessment should include evidence of how the risks will be mitigated and any contingency plans that have been put in place.</p>
Date Due	1 st August 2021
Rationale	<p>A risk register was submitted, on time, as part of the GOC's annual monitoring review (AMR) process. Upon reviewing the submission, the panel considered that the register does not sufficiently identify the risks to the programmes or rate them satisfactorily. For example, the panel considered that the impact of the significant reduction in student numbers in the current academic year had been underrated on the register. The panel was able to identify a number of risks to both current and future delivery of the programmes that require further discussion and mitigation. The condition is set to reflect this.</p> <p>During the visit, the panel was informed that the risk register is compiled by the ABDO's Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The Principal agreed that the register requires revising to adequately reflect the risks the GOC-approved programmes face. The panel suggested that staff with closer links to the programmes complete the risk register/assessment.</p>
D4.3	The provider must demonstrate the use of effective mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of assessments.
Action 2	The College must review, and strengthen, its existing tutor selection and tutor training & mentoring procedures and implement a process that minimises the variation in marking standards and support between tutors.
Date Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan outlining the review and implementation of the processes should be submitted by 30 June 2021. • Implementation, and evidence of the implementation, should be in place by the start of academic year 2021/22.
Rationale	<p>The panel heard from students of examples indicating inconsistencies in the marks awarded by tutors for identical pieces of work. Further examples were provided of the different levels of support received from tutors. They stated that these issues had been raised with College staff on numerous occasions.</p> <p>The Principal accepted that staff are aware of some of the inconsistencies and provide support to tutors to minimise these as much as possible through discussion with tutors and resources accessible via the virtual learning environment. Additionally, the College delivers an annual tutor workshop (this</p>

	was not delivered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 emergency but will take place this year). These workshops are used to discuss issues such as marking, support, role expectation etc. as a way of minimising inconsistencies. Tutors are made aware that attendance is compulsory at least every other year. The panel was concerned as this could potentially mean that a tutor could attend training only once in a 24-month period, which it considered insufficient.
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3.2 Recommendations offered at the visit	
The panel offers the following recommendations to the provider. Recommendations indicate enhancements that can be made to a programme that are not directly linked to compliance with GOC requirements	
D5.1	A robust quality assurance framework (e.g., a programme committee, staff/student committee, formal board of examiners, quinquennial review process etc) must be in place.
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D5.2	The provider must have effective feedback procedures.
Recommendation 1	The panel suggests the implementation of a student committee & student representative system as ways of strengthening current feedback and evaluation processes.
Recommendation 2	The College is asked to consider formalising its feedback processes to create a feedback structure for its tutors, supervisors, and academic staff.
Recommendation 3	The panel suggests that the College continues with the revalidation process for the BSc (Hons) and foundation degree programmes.
Rationale	<p>Discussions held with the students, supervisors and academic staff assured the panel that the College receives and acts on feedback received from its stakeholders. However, it considers this can be further enhanced. Discussions with the programme team and supervisors highlighted the need to strengthen and formalise the current feedback processes.</p> <p>The panel acknowledges that previous attempts have been made by the College to implement a student committee and to select student representatives. It recognises the challenges presented by the method of delivery of the programmes. However, discussions with students lead it to consider that the implementation of both, as well as being in line with best practice within further and higher educational establishments, could be of benefit.</p> <p>The panel acknowledges that the College had been awaiting the outcome of the ESR prior to carrying out the revalidation of the programmes to ensure it meets the latest standards and requirements. The panel is aware that the revalidation for the degree programmes is due to take place in the next academic year and supports this taking place, regardless of the stage the ESR has reached by then.</p>

3.3 Commendations made at this visit
<p>The panel wishes to commend the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The speed and efficiency of the transition to online teaching as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. • The passion displayed by the academic staff.

- The College's commitment to staff development.