

1 Acknowledgements

The Visitors would like to thank the staff, students, graduates and employers who gave up their time to meet with the Panel during the visit.

2 Introduction

The visit to Glasgow Caledonian University BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme took place on the 4th & 5th March 2015.

The Visitor Panel:

- Professor David Whitaker, Chair
- Christine Harm, Dispensing Optician (Contact Lens)
- Paula Baines, Dispensing Optician (Contact Lens)
- Dr. Julie-Anne Little, Optometrist
- Sheila Needham, Lay Member
- Dr. Sue Fergy, Lay Member

The Visitors were accompanied by Jenna Quinn, Education Manager (GOC). The GOC is required to undertake such visits in order to obtain assurance that the standards of teaching and clinical practice within the programme are compliant with the GOC's core competencies and standards. The Visit was conducted in accordance with the Handbook: *Guidelines for the Approval and Quality Assurance of Routes to GOC Registration for Dispensing Opticians* (2011 version).

2.1 Documentation

Prior to the visit, the GOC received pre-visit information from the University based on requirements outlined in the GOC Handbook.

At the Visitor Panel's request, the additional documentation was provided during the visit:

- Student progression data

3 Visit Outcomes

3.1 Commendations

During the visit, several areas of good practice were identified by the Panel which are highlighted within the main commentary provided in the report.

The Visitor Panel made the following commendations:

- 3.1.1** The Panel commends the high quality reciprocal educational arrangements with local employers.
- 3.1.2** The Panel commends the breadth of opportunity for students to work with real patients in a clinical environment as a major strength of the programme.

3.2 Conditions

The Visitor Panel identified a number of issues relating to the Department's process of signing-off core competencies. These matters are detailed in **Condition 3.2.1** of the report. Given the condition imposed, a follow-up visit is to be conducted before the end of the current academic year, to satisfy the Visitor Panel that the GOC requirements have been met. *The GOC Education Committee will determine the period of continued approval once the follow-up visit has taken place in 2015 (visit date to be determined).*

The Visitor Panel made the following conditions:

- 3.2.1** The inspection of students' logbooks during the visit revealed considerable variability in the signing-off of core competencies, and it was evident that the process did not comply with GOC requirements. The Panel also identified a lack of compliance with the Department's own internal requirement for students to complete all core competencies prior to progression to the next stage of the programme (*further information is given in report section 4.2 Core Competencies*).

In order to satisfy the Visitor Panel that the GOC's requirements have been met, a follow-up visit is to be conducted before the end of the current academic year. As part of this visit, the Panel will undertake an audit of logbooks to verify that all of the current 2nd and 3rd year cohort of students have had all core competencies signed off appropriately and in line with GOC requirements. The Panel will also expect a member of academic staff with responsibility for the programme to have clear oversight of the core competency sign-off process and an appreciation of the progress made by all students in completing their core competencies, thereby allowing for appropriate intervention where necessary.

- 3.2.2** Confirmation from the Professional Body that it has granted continued exemption for GCU students from the FBDO professional theory exams.

The outcome of the forthcoming ABDO Professional Body visit (scheduled in April 2015) must be conveyed to the GOC at the earliest opportunity.

3.3 Recommendations

The Visitor Panel offers the following recommendations to the provider on improvements, which, it is felt, would assist course development and raise standards:

- 3.3.1** The Panel was pleased to observe that in response to a condition given in the previous GOC visit report (2012), the role of Programme Leader was now being undertaken by a registered professional with a GOC recognised dispensing qualification, and experience working as a practising Dispensing Optician. The positive feedback given from a wide range of stakeholders during the visit demonstrated that this has been a successful transition.

However, the Panel also noted the Programme Leader's relative lack of experience at a senior administrative level, and recommends that the Institution put in place a timely programme of staff development that is appropriate to the responsibility of the role in order to ensure his continued educational leadership is supported.

- 3.3.2** The Panel recommend that consideration is given to simplifying the current dichotomy of provision in the final year of the programme. Whilst the Panel acknowledge that the provision of an alternative university-based route to a practice placement was attractive to some students, it was evident that graduates of this route gain a very different experience to those students on the practice-based route, and therefore it is difficult to reconcile the coherence of these alternative exit options. The Panel also had concerns regarding the communication of the relative benefits of the two different pathways to students.
- 3.3.3** The Panel was not fully convinced that the proposed addition of a newly-appointed, part-time optometrist to the programme management team would adequately ensure the sustainability of the programme. The Panel urges the Department to seek the appointment of additional staff with a GOC-recognised dispensing qualification, perhaps through a Clinical Academic route, to support the programme moving forwards.
- 3.3.4** The Panel was encouraged by the positive action taken by the Department to promote a professional identity for Ophthalmic Dispensing, and were satisfied that both staff and students shared an enthusiasm for the successful delivery of Ophthalmic Dispensing alongside other professional disciplines within the School. It is recommended that the Department continue to promote the identity of Ophthalmic Dispensing as a professional career.