

ABDO College
GOC FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
Contact Lens Certificate
8-9 March 2022

Report confirmed by GOC	16 June 2022
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PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title	Contact Lens Certificate
Programme description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A distance learning (DL) course delivered using weekly assignments and online content, as well as two block release sessions delivered face-to-face, on campus. • Taught at level 6. • Comprises of the theory and some of the practical elements of the full route to CLO specialty registration. • Final examinations delivered, managed and the responsibility of ABDO Examinations.
Current approval status	Fully approved (FA)
Approved student numbers	50

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (panel)	
Chair	Alan Kershaw, Lay Member
Visitors	Katie Carter, Lay Member Rebekah Stevens, Optometrist (OO) Mark Chatham, Dispensing Optician / Contact Lens Optician (DO/CLO) Alexander Gorman, Dispensing Optician / Contact Lens Optician (DO/CLO)
GOC representative	Lisa Venables, Education Manager
Observers	Georgina Carter, Education Administrator

1.4 Purpose of the visit	
Visit type	FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
<p>The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit was to:</p> <p>Review the ABDO College (the 'College') Contact Lens Certificate programme (the 'programme') to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure it meets the requirements as listed in the GOC's Contact Lens Handbook – Guidelines for the approval of education, training and qualifications enabling entry to the contact lens specialty (November 2007) (the 'handbook') and the GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Documents-List of Requirements (list of requirements). 2. Consider whether the programme sufficiently meets the GOC's requirements for full approval to continue. <p>This visit took place remotely.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event type	Overview
16/02/2017	Visit	Routine quality assurance visit took place, panel recommended no new conditions and three recommendations.

12/10/2020	Administration	The College informs the GOC of a new college principal due to start in post summer 2021.
02/11/2020	Change	The College continues to notify the GOC of any changes made to the delivery of the programme in light of the Covid emergency including more online delivery and blocks in 'bubbles'.
10/12/2021	Change	The College informs the GOC of its intention to admit a second cohort of contact lens students into the academic year 2021/22. The arrangement is not a permanent change request but one to deal with an influx of additional students caused by the pandemic.

PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes	
<p>The panel was satisfied that the Programme meets the regulator’s standards. The panel was supportive of the provider’s plans for changes to the programme to enhance curriculum delivery and cohesion between its various parts, and in response to the GOC’s Education Strategic Review and its direction of travel. The panel recommend one condition is set in order to ensure the proposed changes are reviewed. The panel made four recommendations to further enhance the programme.</p>	
<p>The panel was satisfied that the programme should continue to be fully approved and suggest the next visit should take place in five years (2027).</p>	
Summary of recommendations to the GOC	
Previous conditions – met/unmet	There were no previous conditions.
New conditions	<p>The panel recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One condition is set • All requirements were MET <p>Condition is set to ensure ongoing monitoring rather than being related to a specific requirement not being met, details regarding the condition are set out in Part 3.</p>
New recommendations	<p>The panel recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four recommendations are offered. <p>Details regarding the recommendations are set out in Part 3.</p>
Commendations	<p>The panel offers three commendations</p> <p>Details regarding the commendations are set out in Part 3.</p>
Actual student numbers	<p>Intake 1 September 2021: 47 students</p> <p>Intake 2 March 2022: 35 students</p>
Approval/next visit	Spring 2027
Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g., when students are in, hospital, audit etc.	<p>The visit should be scheduled to factor in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable time to speak to students • Teaching observations – this will be dependent on the dates of the teaching blocks • Speaking to practice supervisors (three or more supervisors to be made available) • Speaking to Distance Learning Tutors (three or more tutors to be made available)

2.2 Previous conditions		
The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of 16 February 2017		
Requirement number	Condition number and description	Status
N/A	No previous conditions were set at the 2017 visit.	N/A

2.3 Previous recommendations	
The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of 16 February 2017	
Description	Comments
<p>ABDO College should continue with the improvements made to their internal quality assurance processes since the last GOC QA Visit. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the frequency in the number of Board of Studies meetings, currently held annually. • The separation of the Ophthalmic Dispensing and Contact Lens Programme aspects of the Board of Studies meetings, as recommended by the External Advisor to the programme. • An increase in student input to and engagement with the Board of Studies. • Integration of the input from the external adviser into the development of the Contact Lens Programme, and the record thereof. <p>Development of the written record of quality monitoring activities/actions undertaken by the College.</p>	<p>Based on the documentation submitted prior to the visit and discussion during the visit, the panel agreed that the College had taken this recommendation on board. The College had set out a range of mechanisms, both current and planned, to ensure the programme continues to be adequately reviewed and quality assured.</p>
<p>ABDO College should consider seeking approval from the GOC for CET accreditation for the lectures and workshops delivered as part of the Contact Lens Programme.</p>	<p>Based on the documentation submitted prior to the visit and discussions during the visit, the panel noted that the College had taken this recommendation on board.</p>
<p>ABDO College should ensure access to the most current educational resources e.g., online journals, is made readily available to students and staff members on the Contact Lens Programme.</p>	<p>Based on the documentation submitted prior to the visit and discussions during the visit, the panel agreed that the College had taken this recommendation on board.</p>

2.4 Non-applicable requirements
<p>The panel recommends that some requirements be deemed fully or partially non-applicable to the programme at this stage due to its structure and level and the differing, but overlapping, roles and responsibilities of ABDO College and ABDO Examinations, for example:</p>

- The College provides only the theory and some of the practical aspects of the route to registration.
- ABDO Examinations is responsible for the clinical placement and ensuring all the elements of the portfolio are completed under supervision.
- It is the responsibility of ABDO Examinations to check students have acquired the 224 hours of personal clinical experience necessary to qualify.
- ABDO Examinations awards the Contact Lens Certificate.
- ABDO Examinations is responsible for practice visits and ensuring supervisors are adhering to the relevant supervisor policies.
- ABDO Examinations administers and is responsible for all qualifying examinations both theory and practical.

Additionally, there are requirements that only apply to programmes that have yet to reach full approval and therefore do not apply to programmes where full approval is already in place.

A1.3	Provisional approval must be in place prior to advertising the qualification and recruiting the first cohort of students.
A5.2	The award of qualifications using the protected title of optometrist and dispensing optician is limited to qualifications approved by the GOC as meeting the professional standards required.

PART 3 – CONDITIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

Conditions are applied to training and assessment providers if there is evidence that the GOC requirements are not met.

Recommendations indicate enhancements that can be made to a programme, these may not be directly linked to compliance with GOC requirements.

3.1 Condition set at this visit

The unmet requirements for this visit are set out below along with the conditions that are required to meet the requirements.

This condition is set to ensure ongoing monitoring rather than being related to a specific requirement not being met. However, the requirements relating to this are listed below:

C1.1	Theoretical and practical curricula must be related in both structure and function, and provide information regarding flexible teaching and learning methods, learning objectives, assessment methods and requirements, and staff responsible for delivery.
C1.3	Appropriate proportions of clinical work must be built effectively into the course.
C1.4	There must be a taught course element (delivered by approved providers) and, in addition, a period of contact lens practice-based learning (PBL).
C1.8	Teaching and learning must incorporate a range of contemporary practices relevant to the needs of the discipline and the needs of students (incorporating new developments in educational technology).
C1.9	Teaching and learning must incorporate practical and non-practical elements.
C1.13	There must be sufficient feedback provided to students to enable maximum learning and achievement.
C2.1	Staffing provision must be appropriate and sufficient for the proper delivery of the course.
Condition	<p>Submit a report (including any relevant documentation) which sets out the details of how the changes planned (due to be introduced in September 2022) have been implemented and how the changes have and will continue to be monitored and reviewed.</p> <p>This can be provided alongside the College's AMR return in January 2023.</p>
Date due	31 January 2023
Rationale	Prior to and during the visit, the panel was given a great deal of information on the provider's plans for significant change to the programme. These proposals would, if implemented as described, enhance curriculum delivery and cohesion between the various parts of the programme, respond to the needs of students and practice-based supervisors as expressed during the visit. Because these changes are significant the panel agreed that it was important to attach a condition to their implementation and monitoring.

	<p>The documentation set out the details of the changes which would be implemented on or before September 2022 and relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear modularisation of the programme (C1.1). • Block release allocation increased to four weeks (from two weeks) (C1.3 / C1.4 / C1.9). • Re-mapping of programme against syllabus and exam performance statistics, and further development of the blended delivery of the distance materials (C1.8). • Redevelopment of practical training timetables (PTTs) (C1.1). • A greater consideration of using specialist lecturers to deliver practical labs/workshops during blocks (C2.1). • Investigate, through student surveys, the factors that contribute to the low qualification completion rates (C1.13). <p>The proposed changes are a sensible and appropriate response to the current challenges and should be implemented in full. The College is, therefore, required to report to the GOC details of the changes, their implementation, with timelines, and details of how the effectiveness of the changes has been monitored and evaluated.</p> <p>It should be noted that this condition is a precautionary condition to minimise risk in the future to the programme.</p>
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3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit

The panel offers the following recommendations to the provider.

C1.7	Communication to all interested parties must be effective.
Recommendation 1	The College should work to strengthen relationships with all the organisations and individuals who play a part in programme delivery.
Rationale	<p>The College explained that whilst they do have representation at the Opticians Academic Schools Council (OASC)* those who deal with the day-to-day running and teaching of the programme do not have the opportunity to attend and feed into these meetings which adds to an unnecessary disconnect in the designing of the programme content and delivery.</p> <p>The College appears to have an amicable relationship with ABDO Examinations and, clearly, maintaining effective channels of communication between the two organisations is the responsibility of both. Nevertheless, mechanisms for raising concerns and providing feedback to ABDO Exams could be strengthened.</p> <p>The panel was able to speak to only one placement supervisor who was generally positive about their role but who also reported that communication from the provider could be improved. For example, the supervisor would welcome more information about what students are taught during block release.</p> <p>The panel noted the generally good relations but considered the College would benefit from formalising and strengthening relationships with placement supervisors. The panel noted that the</p>

	<p>College has plans to improve its processes for training and communicating with placement supervisors.</p> <p><i>*the Opticians Academic Schools Council or OASC is a council comprising members from each of the approved GOC providers which deliver part or all of a dispensing or contact lens qualification leading to GOC registration. The OASC meets on a regular basis to discuss relevant issues.</i></p>
C1.7	<p>Communication to all interested parties must be effective.</p> <p><i>Relating specifically to the overarching student progression and achievement statistics.</i></p>
Recommendation 2	<p>In collaboration with all relevant parties, the College should explore ways to resolve the issue of high failure rates in qualifying examinations.</p>
Rationale	<p>Failure rates in ABDO qualifying exams continue to be high. This was a noticeable trend prior to the 2020 pandemic but appears to have been exacerbated by it. The College is exploring this, with others, and has identified some contributory factors.</p> <p>The panel noted that the College has taken some steps within their own remit in which to try and address this issue. One example is that the pass marks for ABDO examinations did not align with the pass marks for College assessments (60% and 40% respectively). The College has now changed the pass marks of all its own assessments to match 60%, this was introduced for the 2021/22 cohort.</p> <p>For example, the panel heard that the College now receives a more comprehensive data set from ABDO Examinations that tracks students' performance. This will be valuable in giving the team direction in making changes to the programme to improve its student outcomes.</p> <p>Another example is the significant time that can elapse between programme completion and a student sitting the qualifying exams. The College has tried to address this by providing refresher/revision courses and by ensuring that the information on the VLE remains available to students who have finished the course.</p> <p>The panel acknowledges the positive changes that have already been made and notes that this is not the remit of the College by itself to tackle. However, the panel recommends that the College continues to collaborate with the necessary parties to identify what further steps can be taken to contribute to alleviating the problem.</p>
C3.7	<p>There must be a feedback mechanism on patient experience (anonymous) encountered during the PBL is required, through the use of the portfolio of records of patients seen, with a reflective commentary.</p>
Recommendation 3	<p>The College should review ways to capture reliable patient feedback and to ensure that students benefit from the feedback gathered.</p>

Rationale	<p>During the visit the panel heard that the College does not formally gather any patient feedback because the portfolio is the responsibility of ABDO Examinations. The College is aware that it is a requirement and would like to do more in this area but is limited in how it might achieve this.</p> <p>The panel recommends that the College explore ways in which they might capture such feedback so that they can use it to feed into developments to the programme.</p>
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C2.6	Supervisors must observe, teach and appraise as appropriate and offer other appropriate support.
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Recommendation 4	The College should look at increasing the way in which it interacts on a formal and informal level with its placement supervisors to ensure their role and responsibilities are clear and understood.
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Rationale	<p>Student feedback given to the panel during the visit identified that supervisors were, on occasion, unclear about what they should be working on with their student and at what point of the programme. This resulted in inconsistencies of approach and potential misalignment with content taught to the students when at the College on block.</p> <p>Supervisor feedback supported this. The panel heard that supervisors are given a welcome pack that includes some guidance on the syllabus and access to the supervisors' area on the College website. However, no training is given on teaching/training techniques, which would be beneficial. Supervisors do not receive formal updates on students' progress and receive this only via the student themselves. This information would be helpful to supervisors so that learning in practice can be adapted accordingly.</p> <p>The panel noted that the College has taken steps to build on the relationships with placement supervisors by introducing more in-depth documentation and welcome sessions via webinar. The supervisors are also now given details of the students' learning plans and what competencies are being covered each week.</p> <p>Despite these steps taken, student feedback still indicated variable experiences and the panel therefore recommends that the College increase the support and guidance given to student placement supervisors.</p>
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3.3 Commendations made at this visit

<p>The panel wishes to commend the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College's approach to the management of distance learning tutors including their induction, training and ongoing support. • The thoughtful and comprehensive approach the team has taken to enhancing quality and making improvements to the programme and continue to do so via its future proposals.

- The high levels of accessibility and support students receive from the team and excellent quality of lectures. Based on feedback from students it was clear they place a high value on the block teaching.