

City and Islington College
GOC Full Approval Quality Assurance Visit
Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing
16 & 17 November 2022

Report confirmed by GOC	10 March 2023
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PART 1 – VISIT DETAILS

1.2 Programme details	
Programme title	Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing (part time)
Programme description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing (the ‘programme’) was granted provisional approval in 2005. Full approval for the programme was later granted in August 2009. It is a three-year part-time programme.
Current approval status	Fully approved (FA)
Approved student numbers	48 students per cohort (as of 06 March 2023)

1.3 GOC Education Visitor Panel (EVP)	
Chair	Jane Andrews – Lay Chair member
Visitors	Alexander Gorman – Dispensing Optician / Contact Lens Optician member Kevin Gutsell – Dispensing Optician member Kiki Soteri – Optometrist / Independent Prescribing member Dr John Deane – Lay member
GOC representative	Georgia Smith – Approval and Quality Assurance Officer
Observers	None

1.4 Purpose of the visit	
Visit type	FULL APPROVAL QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT
Visit format	VIRTUAL
<p>The purpose of this full approval quality assurance visit was to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> review the City and Islington College (the ‘college’) Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme (programme) to ensure it meets the requirements as listed in the GOC’s <i>Handbook for Dispensing Opticians 2011</i> (Handbook) and the <i>GOC Education A&QA-Supplementary Documents – List of Requirements</i> (list of requirements) and review the provider’s progress with the conditions set during the last quality assurance visit in December 2020. <p>This visit took place remotely.</p>	

1.5 Programme history		
Date	Event type	Overview
April 2003	Visit	A quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken to review the progress made by City and Islington College – provisional approval was granted with one condition set regarding staffing resources.
July 2004	Visit	A quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken to review the progress made by City and Islington College – provisional approval was maintained, and two conditions were set.
February 2005	Visit	A quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken to review the progress made by City and Islington College –

		provisional approval was not granted due to unmet conditions.
July 2005	Visit	A full quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken to review the progress made by City and Islington College – provisional approval was granted.
11 March 2009	Visit	A full quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken to review the progress made by City and Islington College, three conditions were set with deadlines of 01 June 2009, a re-visit in August 2009 and 01 September 2009 respectively.
August 2009	Re-visit	Full approval was granted for three years subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and reporting.
19 November 2015	Visit	A full quality assurance visit by the GOC was undertaken whereupon seven conditions were set – a deadline of 01 March 2016 was given.
01 September 2017	Change	Previous Curriculum Manager for the Department of Applied Optics departed, and a new manager was appointed.
11 October 2017	Re-visit	A re-visit was conducted to review the progress made by City and Islington College in meeting the outstanding conditions set by evaluating the evidence provided. Due to Panel findings, there were significant areas of concern a revisit in 2018 was recommended.
26 January 2018	Change	Staffing departures and new appointments were made in conjunction with departmental restructuring.
01 November 2018	Re-visit	A re-visit was conducted to review the progress made by City and Islington College in meeting the conditions set, the Panel found disappointing levels of progress.
03 July 2019	Review	The GOC launched a Serious Concerns Review (SCR) after conditions were continually deemed as unmet during the repeated visits along with a change in staffing.
04 November 2019	Re-visit	During this re-visit, the programme was deemed as more securely managed with useful progress made regarding the outstanding conditions, therefore, the SCR was closed.
25 November 2019	Administration	A targeted one-day visit to City and Islington College's Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing was scheduled.
13 February 2020	Visit	Targeted one day visit was held. As some conditions remained unmet, a visit was held to focus on City and Islington College's Promonitor system used to track GOC Competencies and included discussions with students who were unavailable to meet Visitors in November 2019.
26 August 2020	Change	In response to the COVID-19 emergency City and Islington College requested to use a blended delivery method in 2020/21 where students would physically attend 1 week in 4 for practicals, with lectures online.
02 December 2020	Visit	During this visit, two conditions were set to be reviewed against the evidence submitted as part of the December 2022 quality assurance visit.
02 March 2021	Event	City and Islington College's facilities were refurbished to create improved lab spaces and preparation areas.

July 2021	Event	A franchise agreement for the “Initial Year in Optometry”, delivered on behalf of the University of Hertfordshire and not leading to registration with the GOC was terminated.
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PART 2 – VISIT SUMMARY

2.1 Visit outcomes	
<p>The panel was pleased to see the programme had stabilised in delivery and teaching whilst progress continued to be made to enhance the quality of the programme.</p> <p>The panel set three new conditions and made four recommendations to further develop the programme.</p> <p>The panel is satisfied that the programme meets the regulator’s standards and should continue to be fully approved, advising the next visit to take place in five years (by November 2027).</p>	
Summary of recommendations to the GOC	
Previous conditions	<p>All previous conditions are MET.</p> <p>Details regarding the previous conditions are set out in section 2.2.</p>
New conditions	<p>4 new conditions are set.</p> <p>Details regarding the conditions are set out in section 3.1.</p>
New recommendations	<p>4 new recommendations are set.</p> <p>Details regarding the recommendations are set out in section 3.2.</p>
Commendations	<p>3 commendations are offered.</p> <p>Details regarding the commendations are set out in section 3.3.</p>
Actual student numbers	<p>Year 1 – 39 Year 2 – 19 Year 3 – 30</p>
Approval status	The programme remains fully approved.
Next visit	Within 5 years .
Factors to consider when scheduling next visit e.g., when students are in, hospital, audit etc.	<p>The next visit should be scheduled to factor in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the part time nature of the timetable. • the attendance days for each cohort (when arranging to meet with students).

2.2 Previous conditions		
The conditions listed below are extracted from the report of 02 December 2020		
Requirement Number	Condition Number and Description	Status
D3.4, D3.21, D4.3, D6.1, D6.2 and D6.3	Condition 1 – City & Islington College must complete the full development and the roll-out of the Promonitor system for all student cohorts and practice visits, in order to ensure student engagement is mandatory and to promote to students the importance of GOC competencies as critical aspects of their training and route to registration.	As a result of discussions held and a clear demonstration of their ProMonitor system during the visit, the EVP considers that this condition is MET .
D5.1 and D5.2	Condition 2 – The college must complete the development of a system for closing the	As a result of discussions held with both staff and

	feedback loop between students and academic committees.	students during the visit, the EVP considers that this condition is MET .
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2.3 Previous recommendations		
The recommendations listed below are extracted from the report of 02 December 2020		
Recommendation	Description	Comments
Recommendation 1	Training for Supervisors to the programme should be formalised.	Following discussions held during the visit, the panel agreed City and Islington College were visiting placements to ensure that the placement and supervision was appropriate to the needs of the College's course and was working with Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) to be confident in the standard of supervisor training.
Recommendation 2	The relationship with ABDO should be clarified, specifically with regards to the sign off of competencies.	The panel was assured by the discussions held and evidence presented during the visit that this recommendation has been addressed.
Recommendation 3	In considering future plans, the GOC should be informed of any changes to physical space allocation so that it meets GOC requirements.	The panel was assured by the discussions held during the visit that this recommendation has been addressed.
Recommendation 4	Marketing – City and Islington College should investigate and develop other forms of marketing the programme.	The panel was assured that the College continued to rely on digital marketing (and made a fresh recommendation regarding the need to improve the accuracy of that), but that other forms of marketing were being considered for an event in 2023.

2.4 Non-applicable requirements

The panel recommends that some requirements be deemed fully or partially non-applicable to the current programme due to the structure and division of roles between City and Islington College and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) Exams, for example:

- ABDO is responsible for the period of supervised practice
- City and Islington College only provides the theory element of the route to registration
- ABDO holds responsibility for ensuring all the elements of portfolio are completed under supervision and signing off practical elements of the core competencies

Additionally, the panel recommends that some requirements be deemed non-applicable to the programme as:

- the programme has full GOC approval
- there is no alternative exit award
- practical elements are taught in preparation for the PQE and FQE exams

A1.3	Provisional approval must be in place prior to advertising the qualification and recruiting the first cohort of students.
A5.1	Student optometrists or dispensing opticians must always make sure a patient knows their student status.
A5.3	Students who gain sufficient academic credits to receive an award but do not meet the professional requirements must receive an alternative award to that approved by the GOC. The alternative award must not use the protected title of optometry/dispensing optician.
D3.2	All routes to registration must include a minimum of 40 contact hours in the training institution for practical skills, distributed appropriately throughout the year.
D3.5	Providers must provide supervisors and students with written guidance on the aims and objectives of the period of supervised practice.
D3.6	A mechanism to ensure students are safe to practise under supervision within the practice environment must be in place.
D3.8	A written protocol for supervision during practical patient contact must be provided.
D3.9	Appropriate contractual arrangements for student placements must be in place.
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.

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.

Commendations identify areas of good practice where the programme exceeds GOC requirements for approval.

3.1 Conditions 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.

A1.2	The route to registration must be clearly communicated to prospective and current students.
Condition 1	City and Islington College must have clear written articulation when advertising the level of the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme. This should include clear information on the need to complete the City and Islington College Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing and the ABDO exams to achieve a level 6 qualification.
Date Due	31 March 2023
Rationale	<p>The panel noted that City and Islington College's Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme is currently described on the College's website - the only current marketing - as being both a level 5 and level 6 qualification without clearly expressing the division of roles between City and Islington College and ABDO Exams.</p> <p>During the 'Introduction' session at the visit, the panel was informed of City and Islington College's intention to adopt further methods of advertising their programme and recruiting students. The panel observed that with new marketing strategies, it would be increasingly important to clarify the roles held by City and Islington College and ABDO and how applicants can achieve the level 6 qualification as part of the route to registration.</p>
A6.4	Providers must notify the GOC, as soon as practicable, of any planned or actual changes or events likely to influence the quality of the programme leading to the qualification and/or its delivery, in line with GOC notifications requirements.

Condition 2	City and Islington College must notify the General Optical Council's Education department of the upcoming ABDO curriculum changes in 2024.
Date Due	Within two months of ABDO notifying City and Islington College of the syllabus change.
Rationale	City and Islington College must continue to follow the process for notifications of events and changes, including notifying the GOC of their changes to the programme delivery following the ABDO 2024 ETR syllabus adaptation. The panel noted this should be done within two months of the change to suitably allow City and Islington College time to make the necessary adjustments.

A6.4	Providers must notify the GOC, as soon as practicable, of any planned or actual changes or events likely to influence the quality of the programme leading to the qualification and/or its delivery, in line with GOC notifications requirements.
Condition 3	City and Islington College must notify the General Optical Council's Education department of their 'bridging' course.
Date Due	31 March 2023
Rationale	During the introductory meeting at the visit, the panel was informed by City and Islington College of their 'bridging' course running as a 5-week intensive course prior to the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme. To ensure the GOC can follow formal review processes, City and Islington College was asked to submit this change, along with any upcoming changes or events as per the event and change notification guidance. The panel confirmed that informing the panel during the visit was not sufficient.

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.
Condition 4	City and Islington College must develop and implement a robust quality assurance framework for their Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing. This should include, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student voice • formal committee processes • planned programme changes
Date Due	30 September 2023

Rationale	<p>When reviewing the submission of pre-visit documentation, the panel noted that no clear framework or system for quality assurance from different stakeholder sources at programme level had been evidenced.</p> <p>For example, during the ‘Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation’ meeting at the visit, the panel noted that although team meetings were conducted, meeting actions and minutes were not well documented and were without clear processes for staff members to follow should they wish to raise a concern or suggest changes.</p>
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3.2 Recommendations offered at this visit

The EVP offers the following recommendations to the provider.

A3.1	Providers must have a robust RPL/APL policy and associated procedures in place, which are quality assured and align with GOC policy.
Recommendation 1	City and Islington College should adapt the college wide RPL/APL policy to create a specific policy for the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing specific programme.
Rationale	The panel noted that although City and Islington College did supply some brief information on their RPL/APL policy, this should be adopted and adapted specifically for the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme, ensuring the necessary and appropriate amendments or additions are made.

A6.2	Providers must provide sufficient information to the GOC, as requested, and in a timely manner.
Recommendation 2	City and Islington College should continue to provide the GOC with any requested documentation or information in a timely manner and notify them of any anticipated delays.
Rationale	When requesting the pre-visit documentation ahead of the visit there were several delays in submitting the required information. Additionally, further requested evidence during the ‘Closing Meeting’ during the visit required an additional reminder to ensure City and Islington College provided the necessary information to the panel.

A6.3	Providers must inform the GOC of any planned or actual changes to the approved student intake numbers of more or less than 10% and provide a rationale to include plans to be put in place so that GOC standards and requirements will continue to be met.
Recommendation 3	As the panel had informed City and Islington College that the GOC was formally setting the College's maximum annual student intake at 48 a year for the current Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing, the College must therefore notify that GOC of any planned or actual changes to the approved numbers of more or less than 10%.
Rationale	As the programme had not previously been set an intake number, this recommendation was set to ensure City and Islington College

	continues to meet GOC requirements and was aware of the necessary process and actions should there be a significant deviation from the approved student intake.
D2.1	The education and training facilities, infrastructure and staffing must be sufficient to deliver and maintain the route to registration.
Recommendation 4	City and Islington College should create a resource plan for the management of increased cohort sizes and potential future changes to syllabus to the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme.
Rationale	As part of the 'Facilities and Resources' meeting during the visit the panel was able to view the physical space accessible to students and was informed of the resources available. In line with recommendation 3, this recommendation was set for City and Islington College to consider the necessary arrangements that may need to be made to achieve successful delivery of future syllabus changes and supporting their students.

3.3 Commendations made at this visit

The panel wishes to commend the following areas:

- The commitment of the programme team in providing support for students with their progression and attainment.
- The impressive utilisation and knowledge of the ProMonitor/MyProgress system applied by both staff members and students to monitor progress, tracking of core competencies and assessments and reporting.
- The systematic introduction of external examiners at the outset of receiving each new cohort, ensuring staff and student understanding of the external examiner role and function.

PART 4 – ADDITIONAL ISSUES

4.1 Cohort Intake Numbers	
Background	Prior to the visit, the GOC had not set a student intake number for the Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing programme and notified City and Islington College during the visit of the intention to do so.
Conclusions	It is recommended that the student cap should be 48 students per cohort. The GOC should be notified of any deviation from this intake number at either more or less than 10%. City and Islington College is encouraged to manage any increases in cohort sizes carefully, considering the effects of having a larger cohort across all years, particularly with the pressures of space.
Rationale	After reviewing the physical resources, staffing and space allocation, the panel concluded that City and Islington College had satisfactory facilities to support an increase of their current student numbers. The panel were minded to recommend setting the student intake number to 40, below City and Islington College's

	maximum capacity of 48. However, after further consideration by the executive and visit panel chair, it was agreed that there was sufficient assurance to set the annual student cohort cap to 48.
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